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CAPTAIN KIT, The Will-o'-the-Wisp; or, The Mystery of Montauk Point.

A Story of Long Island Sound and Shore in the War of 1812, and companion romance to
"The Boy Runaway," and "The Sea Trailer."

BY LIEUT. HARRY DENNIES PERRY, U. S. N.



"AHoy! AHoy! HAIL AGAIN!" SHE CALLED OUT, AND ONCE MORE, FROM DEAD AHEAD, CAME THE CRY: "AHoy! HEREAWAY!"

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OR,

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(U. S. NAVY.)

CHAPTER I.

THE MAD SAILOR.

"Ha! ha! ha! girl, we are well met, for I have a sweet story for thy ear."

The wild laughter, and hoarse voice broke startlingly upon the one who had heard them, and sent a chill of horror to her heart, as she gazed upon the man who had suddenly sprung from behind a rock, and barred her further progress.

At first she felt like turning to fly for her life, as she knew that she stood in the presence of a madman—one of those hermit life in the hills, strange, wild stories were told.

But she knew, too, that his speed was marvelous, and his strength superhuman, and that she was wholly in his power.

A man of splendid physique, and one whose dignity and beauty at one time commanded respect and love; now he was but a wreck of manhood, with long, unkempt hair and beard, deep-sunken eyes, a mouth that would have been stern, but for the nervous quivering of the lips, and the quick, restless movements of a wild beast rather than a human being.

He was dressed in bear-skin shirt and leggings, which added to his brutish appearance, and wore on his head a kind of crown made of birds' feathers, while his feet were incased in mocassins.

At his back hung a bow and a quiver of arrows, and in his belt he carried a long knife, which aggravated his savage looks.

And the one to whom he had spoken in the public road was a young girl of seventeen, from whose beautiful face had flown every atom of color, and whose slight, graceful form was trembling with dread, for the Mad Sailor, as he was called, had been for three years a terror in the neighborhood, though never had he been known to injure a human being.

Some time before a vessel had been wrecked on the coast, and the madman had been hurled, half dead and bleeding upon the rocks; but he had refused all aid and disappeared, none knew whither, until travelers along the high-ways on moonlight nights were startled by demoniacal laughter ringing through the forests, and were wont to see a human form, clad in the skins of wild beasts, flying along over hill and vale like a deer.

To those who sought to speak with him his answer was a sad shake of the head, a waving of his hands above his head, and a bounding away into the forest.

In a cave in the hills he had his home, or rather den, and lived almost wholly on game.

Such was the Mad Sailor, the man whom a young girl had met, half a mile from her cottage home by the sea, and with no one in sight to whom she could cry for succor.

But the maiden possessed undaunted courage, which had been tried and proven many times, as the reader will know, and after a momentary weakness of dread, she fastened her splendid eyes upon him, and in answer to his words to her, said pleasantly:

"Well, I am ready to listen to your story, but, walk homeward with me, as you tell me, for I am in a hurry."

"What! do you ask me to go to thy home, girl?"

"Ha! ha! ha! you little know me, for, mad as my brain now is, it would drive me beyond

all control to cross the threshold of thy father's door. *Thy father!* how I hate him! ay, more than Satan hates holiness; and thy mother, too, I hate—no, no, no; not her do I hate, I will not say that, for, though she made me what I am, a madman, I cannot hate where once I have loved."

"Come, tell me of yourself, that I may prove to you that you wrong my mother. It is some one else to whom you refer, for she is all gentleness and goodness," said the maiden firmly.

"Girl, do you mean to tell me that I, who have worn your mother's image, engraven in iron in my heart, for twenty long years, do not know of whom I speak?"

"You are the child of her that was once Grace Carroll, but who is now Mrs. Andrew Moore?—am I right, girl?"

"You are; my mother was a Miss Carroll," admitted the maiden, with surprise.

"Well do I remember it, girl, for she broke my heart," answered the man, sadly.

"Never did my mother do so intentionally," and the girl's face flushed with anger.

"Women are strange beings. Grace Carroll was beautiful; very much as you are now she looked then, and I believed her true; but she was heartless, and married one whom I hated—your father, girl."

"Well, he is comfortable in circumstances now, and happy in the love of his wife and two lovely daughters, for both you and your twin sister are lovely girls; but, look at me in contrast to Andrew Moore, and you see a man with a heart that is wrung with sorrow, and a brain that madness rules—ay, I am mad—a wanderer, an outcast, and a hunted being."

"Poor man! From my heart I pity you," and the maiden laid her hand softly upon his arm; but the touch and words seemed to suddenly drive him into the frenzy of a wild beast, for he shouted in trumpet tones:

"What! do your lips, Grace Carroll's child, tell me that you *pity* me? By the God above! I'll trample thee into the dust beneath my feet, and tear from thy soft throat the tongue that has so debased me."

She sprung back in wild terror now, for she saw that he meant all he said; but, with a shrieking cry, he rushed toward her, and, unable to bear the fearful dread that clutched at her heart, she reeled and fell upon the mossy bank behind her just as his clutch was upon her throat.

But the long, sinewy fingers never closed, for there came a sharp report, and with a cry of pain, the Mad Sailor turned to see who had thus sent a bullet into his body.

A horseman was not ten paces from him, and he rushed upon his foe, and ere the frightened steed could wheel, one hand was upon the bridle rein and the other grasped the rider; but there was a whirring in the air—a cutting, grating sound following a circle of light, and the hand was severed with one sweeping stroke of a sword!

But the madman was not yet conquered, and again sprung to the attack, and with a power that was irresistible dragged the horseman from his saddle, though he received another shot in the breast, from a pistol his enemy had hastily drawn from the holster.

As the two fell to the earth a fearful struggle began for the mastery, for the horseman was a man of great strength and activity, and his nerve did not desert him; yet, had the Mad Sailor been unhurt, the encounter would have lasted but an instant; but, wounded as he was, he was on equal terms with his enemy, who realized that the end must soon come, and held out nobly, until, with a groan, the poor crazed being fell back, dead, from his grasp.

Panting, blood-stained, yet triumphant the horseman arose to his feet, and beheld the scared face and crouching form of Kittie Moore, and her eyes were staring at him with a look of horror, while her hands were clasped as if in prayer, the whole scene forming a thrilling tableau never to be effaced from the memories of those two, the horseman and the maiden.

CHAPTER II.

THE PARTING.

"Oh, sir, I feared he would kill you," cried Kittie Moore, rising to her feet and approaching the horseman, not without a look of admiration mingling with gratitude, in her glance, for she saw before her a man possessing a slender, graceful form, and a face, though still marked with the stern look brought there by his desperate struggle, yet was exceedingly handsome.

He was dressed in the uniform of a naval officer, was not over twenty-five, and was a man that would be a dangerous foe, and a dangerous lover for a young girl, for there was that in his expression not wholly true.

Wiping his face, and shaking himself together once more, he met the maiden half-way, and answered her question in a low, calm tone, that was strangely fascinating, yet had an air of reckless indifference to the danger he had just known:

"And so did I, miss; but a miss is as good as a mile, and I am glad I happened here in time to keep his clutches off of you."

"You saved me from a fearful death, for it was his intention to kill me. Oh, sir, what do I not owe you?" and the tears came into her sweet eyes.

"Oh, don't thank me, and you'll more than repay me for the little I did."

"Little you did? Why you have taken a human life," she said impressively.

A shadow swept over the face of the young man, as though some unpleasant memory was called up by her words; but he answered quietly:

"And I saved one, and I am content; but what held the man against you?"

"Poor fellow! He is a caged being we have only known as the Mad Sailor, he having been wrecked upon our coast some years ago; but I was returning home, and he wished to visit upon me, wrongs done him in the past by my kinsfolk, he says. I pitied him, and that drove him to frenzy."

"Well, with your permission, I will escort you home as you are still nervous I see, for I am going to the coast, and this road leads thither I believe?" he said politely.

"Yes, it leads along the shore to the village, and directly by my home, where my parents will gladly welcome you. I am the daughter of Andrew Moore, a sea-captain running out of Salem, and of whom you may have heard."

"Indeed! I was fortunate to be on a vessel that rendered him service once, when his brig was dismasted. I am a sailor, myself," he said with a smile.

"So I see, sir; I remember my father's vessel was towed in once by an American cruiser, the Enterprise, I believe."

"Yes, I was a junior officer on her then; but I must hasten, as I have an engagement on Light-house Is and for to-morrow, and must reach there to night, if possible."

"Oh yes, I can lend you my boat to run over to the island in. Ah! it makes me shudder to look at the dead," and Kittie turned her eyes away from the face of the Mad Sailor.

"The living have more terror for me than the dead, Miss Moore; but I will have a look at this poor fellow, and hide him in the bushes until your father sends some one to bury him."

"My father is not at home, Mr.—"

"Ringold—Ivan Ringold is my name."

"Ah! I have heard of you too, Lieutenant Ringold," said Kittie with glad surprise, for his name called up some gallant acts she had heard of from her father; but, as though she had spoken too interestedly, she added:

"My mother will send to the village to have some one bury the poor madman."

The young naval officer made no reply, but bent over the dead sailor and unfastened his bear-skin robe, for he felt a hard object within.

In a bag, securely made of deer-skin, he found a tin box, which he thrust into his own pocket, and turning, joined the maiden who had not seen his act, and the two walked on

down the road, the sailor's horse following slowly along behind.

At the distance of half a mile the road reached the coast, and branched up and down the shore.

Here they paused momentarily, the young officer seeming lost in admiration at the beautiful scene, for behind them were the green hills, and before them the broad, blue ocean, with here and there in the distance an island, upon one of which stood a tower.

It was a calm, sunny afternoon, and all nature seemed asleep, for the day was sultry, and only the fall of the lazy surf, and the tinkling of a cowbell, broke the silence.

Up the coast a quarter of a mile was visible a comfortable farm house, and beyond were other houses, with a village by the sea side not very far away.

"This is truly a beautiful scene, and almost a dead calm rests upon the ocean," said the officer.

"Yes, there is little breeze, but if you must go to Light-house Island to-night, my little cat-rig will run you there if you just blow on her sails almost."

"Why, you are quite a sailor, I judge—oh, I forget, you are the Surf Queen, as I have heard you called," said Ivan Ringold, gallantly.

"Yes, the coast sailors give me that name, for having gone off and aided them when wrecked. See, there is my home!" and she pointed up the coast to the farm-house.

"And an inviting retreat it seems. Ah, me! if I could but find some such quiet nook as that in which to pass my days with one I loved, life would be one long dream of joy!" He spoke fervently, bending his fascinating eyes upon the beautiful girl walking by his side, with a look that brought the color to her face.

"There is my little Zephyr, lying at anchor near the shore," announced Kittie, seemingly anxious to change the subject, and pointing to a small cat-rig boat of pretty model.

"As I know not how else to reach Light-house Island, I will have to avail myself of your kind offer, Miss Moore," answered the young man, and as they soon reached the beach in front of the pretty farm-house, he added:

"May I ask that my horse be looked after until my return to-morrow?"

"Certainly; I will have the farmer boy take him to the stable. But you will certainly come into the house, and allow my mother and sister to thank you for what you have done for me?"

"No; I really cannot spare the time, as I wish to reach the sea front of the island ere sunset, and there is scarcely a breath of wind."

The maiden seemed disappointed, and casting her eyes around the horizon, replied:

"You will have more wind than you want before long, for we are going to have a storm."

"Why, what a sailor's eye you have! But you are right, for, though all seems so calm now, a gale is brewing, so good-by, Miss Moore; I leave my horse as security for your boat, and if I do not return he is yours."

"If you do not return?" she asked, with surprise.

"Yes, life is uncertain, you know."

"But you will, and then meet my mother and sister."

"Is your sister as beau—I mean is your sister like you?" he asked.

"She is my twin sister, and we are said to be exactly alike."

"Then I hope to see her; but again good-by! and should we never meet again, don't forget me, please."

He kissed his hand to her gallantly, sprung into a light row-boat, and was soon on board the little craft. The sail was quickly spread, the painter unfastened from the anchored buoy, and away went the tiny vessel over the placid waters, just as a deep and distant rumble was heard, and above the hills to the westward, rolled a mass of inky clouds.

"Land on the land shore, sir, for there is no

anchorage on the sea side," she called out, and he raised his cap in answer, and beld on toward the distant island, while along with him he carried the little heart of pretty Kittie Moore, the Surf Queen.

Alas! could she have but seen into the misty future, she would have prayed to die rather than look again into the dark, fascinating eyes of Ivan Ringold!

CHAPTER III. THE SURF QUEEN.

THAT Kittie Moore, or, as the seamen along the coast called her, the Surf Queen, was weather-wise, soon proved true, for by the time she reached the front piazza the storm-clouds had rolled half across the skies, and the wind came ahead of the gale in angry puffs.

At the door she was met by her mother, a lady of forty, with a face yet lovely, and her sister Meta, the counterpart of Kittie herself, excepting a dreamy, almost sad look in her eyes, that did not dwell in the other's.

"Well, Kit, you have a horse, I see, but where's the rider?" asked Meta, pleasantly.

"There he goes, across the bay, and I was wrong to let him go, for there is going to be a severe gale; but where is David, mother? for I want him to put this horse up and then go up to the village after Sheriff Morgan, for, oh! mamma, mamma! I have had such a fearful adventure," and Kittie broke down at once and throwing herself in her mother's arms told her the story of her meeting with the madman, his attack upon her and death at the hands of a young officer, to whom she had loaned her boat to go to the Light-house Island.

But looking into her mother's face and seeing there only pity for the Mad Sailor, and no knowledge of who he really was, she had not the heart to tell her who he was, and thereby bring sorrow to her heart.

In amazement Mrs. Moore and Meta listened to the strange story. David, the farm hand, was summoned and sent at once to the village after the sheriff and sexton, to look after the remains of the Mad Sailor.

But Kittie was more interested in the young officer flying across the bay than in her past adventure, fearful as was the memory to her, and she suddenly called out:

"Oh, Meta! he is heading for the Death Rock! How negligent I was not to warn him!"

Both Mrs. Moore and Meta turned quickly and glanced over the bay, now surging under the wind-squalls, the precursors of the coming gale, and saw the little sail-boat holding straight toward the point on which stood the light-house.

But they knew that beneath those waves lay a huge rock, visible at low tide, but, hidden when the tide was in, it had proven the ruin of many a craft, and caused many a brave sailor to go down to a watery grave.

So choppy was the bay now, that even as good a sailor as Ivan Ringold failed to observe the danger ahead, or perhaps he cast too many glances back at the farm-house to see that his course held death lurking in it.

The mother and her two daughters continued gazing with anxiety on their faces, for the fate of the young sailor, though hoping that he might yet change his course so as to avoid the Death Rock, which, if he struck, going at the speed he was, would shiver the little boat to fragments.

"Mother, he holds straight for the rock, and he shall not die if I can save him!" suddenly cried Kittie, and she cast aside her hat and the wrap she wore.

"Kittie, my child! what would you do?" cried the anxious mother, seizing her arm.

"Save yonder noble man from death!" was the firm reply.

"But, my child, see! Yonder storm is almost upon us."

"I see it, and know its dangers, mother; but I have been out in gales before."

"But darkness will be upon you, Kittie, ere you reach the rock!"

"True, Meta, but what care I, when I know my boat will live in any sea! Ah, Father above! he will soon be upon the rock!"

"If you go, Kittie, I will accompany you," declared Meta.

"No, no, no! you remain here, for if I should be lost, you must be here to console mother."

"Kittie, I command you not to go! It is madness," cried Mrs. Moore, in a tone of stern authority.

"Mother, never have I disobeyed you before, but now I will, for he saved me from an awful death, and I will not let him die before my eyes. Good-by, mother! Good-by, Meta!" and gathering her skirts around her, she ran like a deer toward the beach.

Her mother and sister rapidly followed; but when they reached the shore, the brave girl had already sprung into a light surf-skiff moored alongside of a huge rock, had stepped a short, stump mast, and was raising the diminutive leg-of-mutton sail.

"Kittie, my child! my child! come back, I implore you!" came in tones of anguish from the mother.

"Kittie! Kittie! you will break mother's heart!" called out Meta.

But the daring girl answered with a kiss from her finger-tips, and cried out cheerily:

"Don't fear for me! Oh God! the boat has struck, and the storm is upon us!"

It was too true:—straight upon Death Rock the sail-boat had gone, and, as the mast went down, the boat was shivered, and its occupant was thrown out into the seething waters just as the storm, following a vivid flash of lightning and terrific crash of thunder, swept down from the clouds and fell upon sea and shore with a fury that was appalling.

But, out from the sheltered nook darted the surf-skiff, and at its helm Kittie the Surf-Queen, guided it over the wild waters with a skill and courage that was sublime, while from her lips came the words:

"He saved me, and I will save his life, or go down in these wild waters with him."

CHAPTER IV. OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

It was certainly a grand though appalling sight, to see Kittie Moore in her little boat, daringly going out over the wind-swept waters to the aid of a human being, whom she alone could save.

Though seemingly reckless, she was perfectly cool, and held her little surf-skiff on its course with a skill she had learned in many a storm before, for, raised upon the sea-side and the daughter of a sailor, Kittie had taken to the water as though it were her natural element. Her father, too, encouraged her and had carried her with him in a number of his voyages, teaching her navigation and all things pertaining to perfect seamanship.

Crouching down on the bottom of her skiff, one hand firmly grasping the carved tiller and the other the sheet halyard, she held on her way, though her little craft was tossed about like a chip in a mill-race.

"I never saw a worse storm," she muttered, and glancing astern of her she saw that the shore was shut out by the darkness the storm-clouds had hurried on.

"I will save him, or go down myself! Bear up, my little beauty, for you go to the aid of one who saved your mistress a little while ago! Halloo! halloo! halloo!" and her clear musical voice, excited to its utmost, rung out over the dark waters, and anxiously she awaited a reply from their depths.

But no answer came, and again and again the ringing hail was sent forth to cheer the wrecked sailor.

"I am certainly near the Death Rock—yes, there I see it, where the waves are wildest! Halloo! halloo!"

She held her craft to the windward of the rock, but, though she ran within a boat's length of the foaming caldron that mocked the sunken reef, she saw no sign of the boat or the young sailor.

"He has been washed away, and is drifting seaward," she said, and boldly she squared away before the gale, and though her little sail was hardly larger than a pocket kerchief, the skiff fairly flew like a bird over the mad waves.

"Halloo! halloo! halloo!"

Again the cheery cry rung out over the waters, and yet no reply.

"Oh, God! has he already sunk? No, no, he certainly should be a good swimmer, and could hold up some time. Ha! I forget that this wind would drive any object rapidly along; he is further seaward," and once more she held on before the gale, ever and anon calling out until her voice became hoarse.

"Skiff ahoy!"

As a vivid flash of lightning caused Kittie to bend her head to shield her eyes, the hail, in a quick, ringing voice, came out of the depths ahead, and a cry of joy broke from her lips, as she felt that her daring and noble object was accomplished.

"Ahoy! ahoy! Hail again!" she called out, and once more, and from dead ahead, came the cry:

"Ahoy! hereaway!"

She caught the position quickly by the sound of his voice, and bore down to him, passed him, and in an instant the skiff was laying to, while the gale was bearing the drowning man directly down upon it.

"I will throw you a line, and you can board over the stern so as not to capsize the skiff," called the maiden.

"Ay, ay," was the answer, and she saw, now, through the darkness, that the swimmer was upon some object, doubtless a part of the wrecked sail-boat.

As he passed by she skillfully threw a line, which he grasped, then, leaving his support, he drew himself toward the skiff, and, aided by her hand, was the next moment in the boat.

"By Heaven! I am saved by a woman," he exclaimed, as he suddenly crouched down in the boat.

"Yes, I am Kittie Moore, and we are quits, for I have returned the service you rendered me," she said, and with a slight tinge of triumph in her tone.

"I might have known it when I heard you hail. At first I believed you to be a boy, from your voice, and then, from the way you handled your boat in this blow I felt that you were every inch a man; now, I find that I owe my life to you, and rightly are you called the Surf Queen."

"I saw your danger, for I forgot to warn you of the Death Rock, so I came to your aid."

"Thank you I cannot; for what you have risked to save me, only a life-long gratitude can repay; for, had you not come to me, ere long I would have sunk, as I only had as a support the stem of your pretty little Zephyr, and my clothing and boots would have soon tired me out; but do you know where you are, now, for I confess to being bewildered?"

"Oh, yes; home lies yonder, and Light house Island just there."

"And to Light-house Island I must go, if you will kindly take me there."

"To-morrow, yes; but now you return home with me, for we can rig you out in a suit of father's clothing, and make you comfortable."

"No, I must go to-night to the island, for I have an imperative duty calling me there, though I thank you for your kind invitation."

"Why, what can you do on the island to-night?" the maiden asked in surprise.

"I have an engagement there; in fact, was to have been there at sunset, and the storm has delayed me."

"But there is no one there but the old keeper, Deaf Davy, as he is called."

"So much better for the purpose that I have in view. Will you not kindly land me there? and you must seek shelter, too, in the light-house, as this is a fearful night for you to attempt to return home; in fact you shall not."

"Ha! ha! Why, this is a life-skiff, and I am perfectly safe; but I will land you at the

island," and evidently piqued at the determined resistance of the man she had saved to return to her home with her, Kittie headed for the island.

Once more under way the waves tossed the little skiff about so, and the wind howled so savagely, conversation was dropped; but, after a run of half an hour, the island loomed up ahead, and thoroughly acquainted with its outline, the maiden knew her bearings, and soon ran the boat into a little inlet, and made a safe landing.

"Shall I send a boat for you to-morrow?" she asked.

"No, I thank you; I expect a vessel is already here, anchored in some of the bays on the coast, and I can leave on that. If not, I will get Deaf Davy to sail me over to your home, where I can get my horse; but I owe you a boat for the one I wrecked, and will send you one up from Salem."

"No, no, the loss of the boat amounts to nothing, and it was my fault, as I forgot to warn you of the Death Rock. Good-by, sir," and, evidently hurt by his persistent refusal to allow her to serve him further, she shoved the skiff off from the shore.

"Are you angry that I do not place myself under deeper obligation to you, and accept your hospitality?" he asked.

"Oh, no; but you will find cold comfort at Deaf Davy's. Good-night, sir," and the little surf skiff glided away, once more to face the storm on the bay, while Ivan Ringold stood gazing after the daring girl who had saved his life, with strange emotions filling his breast.

"If the morrow end not fatally for me, that girl shall be mine," he muttered, as he turned, and went over the hill to the light-house.

CHAPTER V.

LIGHT-HOUSE ISLAND.

DEAF DAVY, the old keeper was seated in his light-house cabin, glancing out over the placid sea in his front, and unmindful of the storm brewing in his rear, for it was the afternoon that preceded the rescue of Ivan Ringold by Kittie Moore.

Presently the deep roll of distant thunder aroused him, and he arose and went out in front of his cabin, and glanced landward.

"There is goin' to be a blow an' a pretty peart one, too. Waal, I loves ter hear ther wind howl around, as it makes me feel as if I were a sailor ag'in."

"Waal, waal, ef ther haint thet gal Kittie, a-comin' out ter see me; but she must be blind not ter see ther gale a-sweepin' up from landward. Lordy! Lordy! she'll be fish-food yet, she's so reckless," and Deaf Davy turned his eyes upon the coming boat, which held the young naval officer Ringold, and not Kittie Moore, as the reader knows.

Then the keeper looked down the coast, and again his thoughts found vent in words:

"Waal, waal, ther is a leetle craft headin' in here, as though to make a haven before the gale breaks. I must take a closer look at thet vessel, for these is troublous times, and foes, rather than friends, is apt to visit me now, when they come from seaward."

Getting his spy-glass, Deaf Davy turned it upon the strange craft, and again mused aloud:

"It are a stranger—one of them Boston yachts the rich young swells have to cruise round in in pleasant weather; and there's about a dozen men on board. Waal, they'll find a good anchorage in the Lone Tree inlet, for which they are headin' as though somebody on board knows ther coast."

"But I'll lock up early an' then go ter bed, fer I don't want ter lose nothin' or hev my throat cut."

"Now, Kittie, I'll see what in thunder brings you out here in ther face o' a storm, an' a nasty one too," and Deaf Davy turned his glass to the bay behind the island, across which the Zephyr was coming swiftly along under the constantly increasing wind.

"Waal, it haint Kittie, as I do live, but a

chap in gold lace and brass buttons; so, so, what do he want now?"

"Waal, I'll light my lamps an' git ter bed, an' then ther storm may blow, an' ther strangers prow, an' I will be salubrious, for I are deaf an' can't hear 'em ef they do knock at ther door."

With another glance at the yacht, which had run into Lone Tree inlet for shelter, and a look around the horizon, Deaf Davy went into his cabin, barred his door, and shortly after the bright beacon of safety in the tower shone out over the dark waters.

A frugal supper the old man then prepared for himself; but ere it was partaken of, he sprung half out of his chair, as a loud knock was heard at the door, and, forgetting his resolve to remain deaf to all sounds without, called out angrily:

"Who in thunder's that?"

"It's me, Davy—your old friend, Boatswain Bill Buntline," answered a gruff voice without.

"For ther Lordy's sake, Bill, I are too glad ter grasp yer hand," and Deaf Davy opened the door quickly, to find without a tall man in sailor costume.

"Come in, come in, Bill, an' tell me what you are doing here?" said Davy, drawing his friend inside, and again barring the door.

"Well, shipmate, I am down here on a little private business," answered the boatswain, mysteriously.

"Ah! you belong on the yacht I see run in Lone Tree inlet; I thought she had some one at ther tiller who knowed these waters."

"Yes, I came on her."

"Have you left the navy, shipmate?"

"No, I will die in the service, I can tell you, Davy; but the truth is, there has been a squall aboard ship, all owing to Captain Mainhall's pretty daughter, Laura."

"I see, wimmins is alus gettin' men inter trouble; but go on, Bill, fer I is interested," and Davy looked it, as he was a gossip by nature.

"You see, Leftenant Ringold was to windward of the girl, and folks said would soon have her in tow; but he is a little wild and has got nothing but his pay, and the captain made Miss Laura break the cable of love atween 'em, and finding this out there was trouble, for Ringold is a hot-headed fellow, and told his superior what he thought of him, and was promptly knocked on his beam-ends."

"Oh, this is interestin', Bill; go on, quick!" cried Deaf Davy.

"Well, Leftenant Ringold is not the man to take a blow, so he sent a challenge to the captain, an' this island was the place appointed for the meeting."

"And you all comed down in the yacht to have a duel? thet is prime, Bill," and Deaf Davy rubbed his hands in gleeful anticipation of the hostile meeting.

"I don't think it's prime, for I likes the captain, Davy, and thatt Ringold is a dead shot and swordsman, and I hope something will happen to him, for he hasn't been here yet, or you would have seen him."

"No, Bill; but there are a young gold-lace and brass-button chap coming across the bay now, in the sail-boat that belongs to Kittie Moore; but if he don't look out he'll never reach here, for this is a fearful blow."

"It is indeed; it makes the island fairly rock, and I hope will drown the leftenant, for if it don't, the captain will go under, I fear."

"And where is Captain Mainhall now, Bill?"

"On board the yacht; you see he wanted a good place for the meeting and asked me about it, and I told him of this island."

"It was good o' you, Boatswain Bill, to remember the home o' yer childhood, pleasant like; yas, this are a prime place fer a duel."

"They didn't want to attract attention so the leftenant came by land with his second, and—"

"There is only one man in the boat, Bill."

"That is strange; but we'll soon know what

it means; my gracious! but how this storm howls! it isn't right to wish ill of a shipmate, Davy, but I hope he won't reach the island."

"When is the duel to come off?" asked Deaf Davy.

"It was to be at sunset this evening; but it will be now at sunrise."

"I will be there, Bill."

"I don't think the captain will allow it, Davy."

"Oh, I'll be there; they'll doubtless fight down at the Ravine Spring; tell 'em it's a prime place, Bill, an' I'll be hidin' somewhere in the rocks, an' see it all. I loves duels, Bill, for it gives me suthin' to think of."

"You are the same old man, Davy; always ready for a bit of gossip or excitement; but I must go back to the yacht."

"No; wait until the storm is over, or stay all night."

"I cannot, for the captain sent me up to see if the lieutenant and his second had arrived; let us look out and see about the boat you saw."

They went to the door, but all was darkness and storm without, and the roar of the sea was fearful, while the force of the wind made the stone cabin and tower tremble.

"He hasn't landed yet, Davy."

"No; I guess he's gone under; it's too bad, fer it will spoil ther duel."

"Well, I will return to the yacht and report; good-night, Davy; guess I'll see you tomorrow, for I want to ask about the folks on the coast," and Boatswain Bill wended his way back through the storm, to the inlet where the yacht was anchored in a snug haven.

Hailing, a boat was sent ashore for him, and five minutes after he entered the comfortable cabin where, at a table, writing, sat a person of fine appearance, clad in the uniform of a captain in the navy, while a gentleman in citizen's attire lay upon a lounge smoking.

The one was Captain Edwin Mainhall, and the other a wealthy merchant in Boston, his particular friend, and the owner of the yacht.

"Well, boatswain, have Lieutenant Ringold and his second arrived at the island?"

"No, sir; and it looks as though they would not."

"What mean you, Buntline?" asked the captain, with surprise, while his second arose from the lounge.

"A boat was coming across the bay, sir, containing but one person, but whether Lieutenant Ringold or Lieutenant Darrell was in it, I do not know, for I did not see him."

"And he did not land whoever he was?"

"No, sir, not when I left had he done so, and Deaf Davy thinks his boat has gone under."

"I almost wish that it had, for I don't like this meeting, Mainhall," said Bartley Livingstone, earnestly.

"No, no; I hope he will not die thus, Livingstone; he is not the man I wished Laura to marry, for I know him to be a gambler, and dissipated; but then, he was very insulting when I severed his engagement with my daughter, and I struck him, and I must meet him, for I am his superior in rank, and did I not do so, it would be said I shielded myself behind my position."

"I cannot but hope that the storm has prevented the duel," answered the yachtsman.

"Boatswain, at dawn go to the light-house, and if nothing has been heard of the lieutenant, we will search the shores for his body, as this is certainly a fearful gale: but I cannot understand, if Ringold is in the boat, why Darrell did not come with him."

"Or, if it is Darrell, where is Ringold?"

"True; well, the morrow will decide," said Captain Mainhall sadly, and saluting politely, Boatswain Bill left the cabin.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE RAVINE SPRING.

HARDLY had Deaf Davy settled himself to the duty of finishing his interrupted supper, when he was again startled by a loud rap at the door.

"It's Bill ag'in," he said, opening the door.

But it was not Bill the boatswain, as Deaf Davy saw at a glance.

Before him stood a tall form, clad in uniform, and that he was saturated from head to foot was evident.

"Well, old shipmate, may I crave shelter for the night?" asked Ivan Ringold in a pleasant tone.

"I guesses you be Left'nant Ringold?" suggested Davy.

"Yes, but I do not recall your face."

"Guess not, left'nant, as we hav'n't met afore; but Boatswain Bill Buntline was up here awhile since looking for you—"

"Ah! from the yacht; when did she arrive?" quickly asked the officer.

"Before sunset; she's at anchor in the Lone Tree inlet."

"All right; now give me some of your rig to put on, while I dry out my suit, and if you have a little spirits, and something to eat, you will oblige me," and the young officer slipped a gold piece into the hands of Deaf Davy that made him spring to work with a will, while he muttered:

"Goin' to fight a duel at sun-up, an' hes a appetite fer rum an' food: well he's a cool one."

Getting out a dry suit for the officer to put on, Davy quickly spread before him a really good supper, and placed on the table a bottle of French brandy, upon which no duty had ever been paid.

Ivan Ringold drank deeply, ate heartily, and then hanging his clothes before the fire, rolled himself in a blanket and sought rest, dropping off to sleep as peacefully as an infant.

"Waal, he *are* a cool un' an' no mistake," muttered Davy, and he threw himself down upon his own humble cot, which the lieutenant had refused to accept.

And without the winds howled and the sea roared: but until the first glimmer of dawn illumined the windows the two men slept.

Then, as a ray of light fell on his face, Ivan Ringold awoke with a start and sprung to his feet.

"Well, old shipmate, we nearly overslept ourselves: come, arouse yourself, and we'll have breakfast, for there is work for us to do."

"Work for us to do?" echoed Davy.

"Yes, I came here to fight a duel, old man: a charming spot for a hostile meeting, I see, and within the hour we must be on the field."

"We?" and Davy looked surprised.

"Yes, *we*, for *you* are to be my second."

"Me?" cried Deaf Davy, now wholly horrified.

"Certainly; I have accepted your hospitality, and you are my friend, for I have no one with me to act as such."

"Oh Lordy!" and Davy knew not what to say as he bustled about getting breakfast.

He had hoped to witness the duel, and scent the powder from afar, but to be a participator in the deadly affair was something that wholly unnerved him.

But he got breakfast, and, after a glass of brandy to steady his nerves, Lieutenant Ringold led the way from the cabin, just as the east was growing rosy under the coming of the sun, for the winds had swept the clouds away, and it was a bright, beautiful morning.

With firm tread Ivan Ringold started in the direction of the Lone Tree inlet, Davy pacing along by his side, when they suddenly met Boatswain Bill.

"Well, bos'en, the captain is here, I judge?"

"Yes, sir, the yacht lies yonder: you can just see her topmast."

"Well, I am here too, so where is the meeting to be?"

"At the Ravine Spring, sir; but I will run on and tell the captain, for he hardly expected you to be here, sir."

"What! dared he doubt my coming?" cried the young officer angrily.

"Oh, no, sir; but we feared you had been lost in the storm last night."

"And doubtless Captain Mainhall wishes I

had been; but no, I am here, as you see, and shall await him at the spring, and I care not to wait long."

The boatswain hastened back to the yacht, while Deaf Davy and the lieutenant went on toward the meeting-place.

"A pretty spot this for a duel, old shipmate; and beneath that tree there is the very place for a grave."

"Oh Lordy!" groaned Davy, and the reckless young sailor laughed heartily, and said:

"Oh, you won't have to fill it, Davy; but there come the captain and his party."

A moment after, Captain Mainhall, looking pale, but calm, came forward, accompanied by Bartley Livingstone, his second, and Mort Mercer, the surgeon of the vessel which the captain commanded.

He bowed politely to his enemy, who raised his cap in salute, while the yachtsman asked:

"Why Ringold, where is Darrell, your second?"

"His horse fell with him coming out of Salem, and I was forced to take him back to the tavern and leave him, for his arm was broken; but never mind, old Deaf Davy here will act for me."

"Oh Lordy!" groaned Davy, stepping over to where Boatswain Bill stood, as though for consolation.

"Lieutenant Ringold, this is no time for jokes," sternly said Bartley Livingstone.

"I am as well aware of that, as are you, sir; if my second is not suitable to you, I will ask Doctor Mercer to act for me," was the haughty reply.

"If the captain and doctor consent, so be it," answered Mr. Livingstone.

"I will of course serve Lieutenant Ringold, under the circumstances; but cannot this sad affair be arranged without a hostile meeting?" asked the surgeon.

"No, sir, I came here to fight, not to talk," was the haughty response of the lieutenant.

Captain Mainhall bowed assent, and Boatswain Bill came forward with the weapons, a case of dueling pistols, while Deaf Davy quickly retreated to a distant position from which to witness the hostile meeting.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUEL.

THOUGH KITTIE MOORE knew well the danger she had to face, in recrossing the bay to her home, she did not shrink from it, for she had full confidence in her own courage and skill.

Under ordinary circumstances she would have sought shelter in the cabin of Deaf Davy, until the storm blew itself out; but well she knew that longing eyes were ever gazing out over the blank, windswept waters for her, and that hearts were already despairing of ever again seeing her alive.

With the same strength and skill that had before served her so well, she held on her way back to the farm-house shore, swept like a racer by the Death Rock, and soon was able to see the bright lights, that her thoughtful sister Meta had placed in every window, to guide her back to a haven of safety.

As she drew nearer the shore, she saw forms gliding rapidly to and fro before the windows, and it recalled to her the dead madman, whose end had brought a crowd together to hear the story from her lips.

At length the quick eyes of Meta spied the returning skiff, and in wild joy she shouted:

"She comes! she comes!"

All eyes were at once turned upon the wild waters, and then there arose, far above the howling storm, a cheer from half a hundred men and women who had gathered at the farm-house.

"But she is alive! *he is lost*," cried Meta, anxiously, and all gathered at the shore to greet the daring Surf Queen, who, a moment after ran her light skiff upon the sandy beach.

"God bless you my brave child," and the anxious mother threw her arms around Kittie, all dripping as she was, and Meta also embraced her with joy in her heart, while the

neighbors crowded around her with welcomes, for all the dwellers along the coast loved the brave girl.

"And he was lost?" asked Meta, in a low whisper, as they went up to the house.

"No, I saved him, though the poor little Zephyr was dashed to pieces."

"But where is he, Kittie?"

"On the Light-house Island; he preferred to go there."

"Why should he, Kittie?" persisted Meta.

"Don't ask me; at least not now," and Kittie hurried to her room, followed by her sister, to change her clothing, while the crowd gathered in the large parlor, for the sheriff and village magnates were there, and they were discussing the killing of the Mad Sailor.

Having changed her clothing, Kittie told the story of the madman's attack, still hiding however the fact that he knew her parents, and the crowd departed, and the mother and her daughter were alone.

But Kittie seemed nervous from some cause, and Mrs. Moore suggested that she go to bed, which was willingly assented to.

"Meta, I wish you to help me out in something I intend to do," said Kittie earnestly, as soon as the two sisters were alone in their own room.

"Of course I will, Kit: what is it?"

"Well, you know this young officer whom I saved to-night?"

"No, but I doubtless will know him sometime, judging from the interest my sister takes in him," responded Meta archly.

"Nonsense! he saved me from a fearful death, and I feel assured that he has gone to the island for some strange purpose, and I am going to find out for what."

"But how can you, Kittie?"

"From certain remarks he made, I believe that there is trouble to follow his going there, and I intend to leave here before day, and—"

"No, no, Kit, you must not do that."

"But I must, and will; the storm is going down, and I will run over in the surf-skiff, and I may be of use; at least I am determined to go, only I wish you to keep mum about it until breakfast-time, when I guess I'll be back."

"But what will mother say?"

"I'll take the scolding when I get back; but I am determined to go."

With Kittie Moore to determine was to act, and just as the eastern skies were growing gray, she kissed Meta good-by, declining to allow her to accompany her, and stealing cautiously from the house, soon stood at the beach.

A few moments of preparation and the skiff was sailing away from the land under a six-knot breeze, and just as the sun arose above the horizon, Kittie landed on the Light-house Island, and within view of the tall mast of the little yacht.

"I knew there was to be trouble; Oh, how glad I am that I came," she cried, and she commenced to ascend the hill, when suddenly she halted, for in a small vale not far away, her eyes fell upon a group of men.

Two of that group she knew, for one was Ivan Ringold, the other was Deaf Davy; but the other three were unknown to her.

Like a statue she stood, her eyes gazing upon one face, and her tongue powerless to cry out, for now that she was face to face with the danger she dreaded, not a word could she utter.

"Oh, why did I come here? I dare not interfere, for what right have I?" at last broke from her dry lips, and she sunk down upon the damp earth and still gazed upon the dread scene.

And as she looked she saw one man pace off a certain distance and two others take their positions at specified places.

Then, into the hands of each was placed a pistol, and into their faces Kittie Moore looked, while anguish rested upon her own.

One was a man of dignity, and the stamp of intellect and goodness was on his face, which was pale, very pale, but calm and stern.

The other was the one who had saved her

from the Mad Sailor, and whose life she had saved not twelve hours before, and his dark, fascinating face was indifferent to the death he faced; in fact, he seemed to be reckless of the consequences.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

Like a death knell the deep voice of Bartley Livingstone broke the quiet ominously.

"Ready!" came in almost cheery tones from the lips of Ivan Ringold, while Captain Mainhall merely bowed.

Then came the last fatal words:

"Fire! one! two! three!"

At the word *three*, the two pistols flashed, for, from some motive, known only to themselves, each man had hesitated as long as possible to pull the trigger.

And with the sharp crack of the pistols, which rung out like one report, both men fell to the ground in their tracks, and then a wild shriek, caused the vale to echo and re-echo, as Kittie dropped forward on her face.

Quickly Boatswain Bill and Deaf Davy ran to her side, while the surgeon and the second sprang to the aid of the two men who had fallen.

But recovering herself with an effort, the maiden shook off the feeling of weakness that had come upon her, and springing to her feet bounded away from the boatswain and Davy, and reached the spot where lay the two motionless forms, in time to hear the ominous words of the surgeon:

"*Captain Mainhall is dead, and Lieutenant Ringold will die.*"

"No! no! no! he will not! he shall not die, for I will nurse him back to life; quick, sir, if you are a surgeon, dress his wounds and have him taken to my boat, and he shall have every care," she said, almost peremptorily.

"What is Ivan Ringold to you, maiden?" asked Bartley Livingstone.

"It matters not; do as I say, and I will bless you, but let him lie here and bleed to death, and I will curse you."

"My poor child, I will do all that I can for him, but I do not think he can live," and the surgeon bent over the lieutenant and began to probe for the bullet in his side, while Kittie stood by eagerly watching his every act.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FATAL LETTER.

In a cosy little room of the Moore cottage, an invalid lay upon a settee, reading a letter just brought to him by the village postman.

Though he had for three long months lain there, wounded and suffering, the dark, fascinating face of Ivan Ringold was readily recognizable.

In her boat Kittie Moore had borne him home, that morning after the fatal duel, and under the tender nursing of herself and the care of the village doctor, aided by a strong constitution, the young officer had rallied at the very brink of the grave, and was now wholly out of danger.

"Well, sir, good news I hope?" said Kittie pleasantly, entering the room as Ivan Ringold finished reading the letter for the second time.

"You shall be the judge, Miss Kittie; you remember several days ago I spoke of my friend Ned Darrell, a brother officer in the navy?"

"Yes, he was to—"

She paused, and her face colored up, while he continued calmly:

"Say what you intended: he was to have seconded me in my duel with Mainhall?"

"Yes," she said faintly.

"But his horse fell and broke his arm, and I am glad it happened, for had Ned come on with me, we would have taken a different course, for we would have gone by boat to the island, from a point further down the coast, and then I should never have met you."

She made no reply, and he went on:

"Well, Ned has gotten into trouble, the same as I have, for he has been dismissed from the navy upon the same charge."

"Duelling! oh, how fearful it is."

"Yes, he writes me that he was grossly insulted by his ranking officer, and challenging him, they met at Portland some time since, and Ned killed him, and was promptly dismissed from the service."

"Now, he says, that he intends to come by here for me, and together we will arm and man a vessel in which to go privateering in the war, which we will soon have with England; but, do you know, I am not very anxious to have him come to your house?"

"Why?" innocently asked Kittie.

"Because he is awfully handsome, and a perfect lady-killer, and you might fall in love with him."

"No danger; I know how to guard my heart."

"I fear you do, for you have certainly guarded it against my attacks; but you will not longer do so, will you Kittie? you will love the one whose life you have twice saved, and not cause me to feel sorry that the bullet of Captain Mainhall did not end my days forever?"

Kittie was now very pale, and her voice trembled as she replied:

"I would not share the heart of the man I loved even with Meta, Ivan Ringold."

"Nor do you, Kittie; I love only you."

"And yet I have been told, that you loved Laura Mainhall, and yet took the life of her father."

"I admired her, yes, and perhaps, with her father's consent one day she might have been my wife; but I did not know what love was, my beautiful girl, until I met you, and I beg you to be my wife."

He spoke earnestly, and turned his fascinating eyes full upon her, while she said:

"That I have dearly loved you, Ivan Ringold, from the day you saved me from the Mad Sailor, I frankly admit; but though my parents are willing that I should care for you in your suffering, they have warned me against you, as they have been warned by many never to allow you to darken their door again when once you are able to leave it."

"Kittie, well I know that I am slandered, but people do not always tell the truth, as I can prove; but do you intend to make us both miserable through life, because the world talks against me?"

"No, Ivan."

"And you will marry me, come what may?"

"Yes, Ivan; where I give my heart my hand shall go with it, come what may," she said firmly.

"Bless you, my darling; I will write at once for Darrell to come by for me, and then I will go with him to Boston, or New York, and with a fleet, armed schooner beneath my feet, I will make the Government yet receive me back into its service."

"I trust you may, Ivan," said Kittie quietly, and brought him writing materials, and the letter was written to Ned Darrell.

Alas! far better had it been for all had it never have reached the one to whom it was addressed, for untold misery it brought upon those who should have been shielded from every sorrow.

CHAPTER IX.

UNMASKED.

In an elegant suite of rooms, in the fashionable part of New York City, a woman was seated before an easel, engaged in painting a marine picture, a scene on the coast of New England.

A year had passed since the reader last beheld her, in her home by the seaside, and the beautiful face has grown sadder, yet a sadness that but adds to its loveliness, and no one would fail to recognize Kittie Moore; but no longer Kittie, the Surf Queen, for one night she fled from her parents' protection, to the arms of the man who had won her heart; ay, fled from the scenes of her childhood, to mingle in fashionable life in the metropolis, whither Ivan Ringold had taken her.

But, amid the glitter of society, poor Kittie

could see dark spots, and soon found that her husband was a man whom many feared, and few liked.

Without outward means of support, he yet lived most extravagantly, and loaded her with jewels, and placed before her every luxury, until at last she felt that he won at the gaming-table the gold that bought for them such splendor.

At last the glamour wore off, and gradually he became colder and colder in his manner toward her, until she began to fear that he had ceased to love her, and the thought was madness to her, for, with all his faults, she loved him with an affection that was idolatrous.

And as she thus sat at her easel, trying to drive away sad thoughts in work, the postman brought her a letter, and over her a flood of bitter memories came, for it told her of the parents at home whom she had deserted, and the sister she had so fondly loved.

Upon her father, in his declining years, misfortune had fallen, for his vessel had been wrecked, and troubles not coming singly, his little hoarded wealth in the bank had been swept away by failure, and the farm had been loaded with a heavy mortgage.

And Meta?

Poor girl, she, too, had loved not wisely but too well, as her sister had done, and had fled from home with Ned Darrell, and whither they had gone none knew.

In bitterness of spirit, poor Kittie mourned, and down her fair cheeks rolled tears of anguish, until a knock at the door caused her to start.

In answer to her call to come in, it opened and a letter was handed to her by a boy.

It was in the hand of Ivan Ringold, and she read it through with an amazed and indignant face, which she turned away from the messenger, that he might not see what her feelings were.

Thus ran the letter:

"ON BOARD WILL-O'-THE-WISP.

"DEAR NED:

"I have at last secured the beautiful craft on which I write to you, and though small she will enable me to gain a larger one, and I write at once to you to have you join me, as I heard of your arrival in town yesterday, and that you had left your wife in the Eastern States somewhere.

"As for me, I intend to give Kit the slip, for she is not legally my wife, as I paid a gambler pal a good round sum to play parson, and he did it so well, I am inclined to believe he was educated for the ministry, and it seems to me I have heard that he was, but went to the bad.

"I leave Kit in New York, with money enough to return to her parents, and she has jewels sufficient to support them for a year or so; besides, I am tired of her, for I never was a constant lover.

"Now my crew are at the underground Den on Pearl street, and I wish you to go there and get them, and tell them to come to the sloop two by two to-night, for I dare not leave the vessel, owing to my killing Conrad the Faro King last night, of which you have doubtless heard.

"The sloop lies at the foot of Catharine street, and to find the Den, go to the place opposite Hallet's saloon in Pearl street; there are three doors, and knock on the middle one three times.

"A voice within will ask you:

"How do you come?"

"To this answer:

"I come from the land of distress."

"The voice will ask you:

"Whither bound?"

"You answer:

"To the glad sea waves."

"Then you will enter and ask the one who opens the door to take you to the social hall, and once there tell the men who you are, and that I need them to-night.

"You are to be second in command, and if we cannot make a fortune together on the ocean wave, we had better turn virtuous, and settle down in old Massachusetts as farmers.

"But this night I intend to make my first blow for fortune, and gain a lady-love too.

"Be sure and come, for I will expect you.

"Yours ever, IVAN."

For a few moments Kittie thought her reason was leaving her; but, by a mighty effort she rallied, and though as pale as the dead, asked calmly:

"Did not Mr. Ringold give you another letter?"

"Yes, miss."

"Have you it?"

"Yes, miss."

"Give it me."

"No, miss, I cannot; he told me to give it only into the hands of the one to whom it is addressed."

"True, it is addressed to Lieutenant Ned Darrell."

"Yes."

"Well, there has been a mistake, for in his haste Mr. Ringold has folded the letters and addressed them wrong; see, this one to me, as he supposed, commences 'Dear Ned.'"

"I see, miss; it's quite a mistake."

"Then you will give me my letter, of course?"

"I'd like to, but he paid me well to deliver them."

"Are you in his service?"

"Oh, no, miss, only to-day."

"Here, I will give you these four pieces of gold, and I will attend to the delivery of the other letter myself."

The man's eyes sparkled and he answered:

"I'll give it to you, miss, for I'm a poor man; but I'll keep clear of Mr. Ringold; here is the letter."

Kittie paid him the money and grasped the letter eagerly, and as the messenger turned to depart, sat down and broke the seal.

It was written to her and ran as follows:

"MY DEAR KIT:

"To-night I leave you forever, for I have to go to sea and carve out for myself a fortune, if not under the American flag, beneath one of sable folds where a commission is not needed.

"The furniture in the rooms and all else I give to you, excepting my desk, which kindly send me by the bearer of this.

"In the desk you will find a purse of gold, which you can keep for your wants, and it, with what you can realize from your jewels and furniture, will keep you and your parents, who I learn have been unfortunate, at least for a time.

"Of late you have accused me of losing my love for you; you are right, for, try I never so hard, my heart is not one to remain true to a woman; besides, our marriage was but a fraud, and you have no legal hold upon me.

"Now don't go off into hysterics, for it is not your nature so to do; but take my desertion of you with nerve and you'll not be unhappy.

"Farewell, and do as I do, *forget the past.*"

"Yours, IVAN."

Poor Kittie did not faint, nor did she go into hysterics; but in her eyes there was a look that boded no good to Ivan Ringold, whose life was now unmasked, and who had so cruelly deserted her when he knew that he was the idol of her worship.

CHAPTER X.

METAMORPHOSED.

FOR some moments after reading the cruel letter, sent to her by the man for whom she had given up all else in the world, Kittie stood like a statue, her brow clouded in thought.

But suddenly a flash of triumph lighted up her face, and five minutes after she was out on Broadway making certain purchases.

Returning to see her rooms she was accompanied by a Jew, who glanced with a knowing look around him, and said:

"Dish ish all very purty, mish, now let me sees ter dimints."

"First, what will you give me for the furniture in the rooms?" she asked abruptly.

"Ish t'e rent paid?" he cautiously asked.

"Yes, here are my receipts, and you have two months yet of time, which I will give you."

"Dot is very goot: I will gives you t'ree hundred tollars."

"It is not enough; I must have five, for I know their value."

"I gives you four."

"If you do not mean to give me five, I can see some one else."

"I gives you four fifty—"

"Enough, I will seek another purchaser," and Kittie started for the door, but the Jew called out:

"Vera well, I gives you five hundred: but it ish too mooch."

"Then why do you give it?"

This was a puzzler, and the Jew hastily said:

"Now t'e jewels."

"Here they are: diamonds, rubies, emeralds and some little trinkets; then this silver ser-

vice, and that trunk of silks, laces and velvets; what are they worth to you?"

"Dey is vera fine, and I will gives you two t'ousandt tollars for the lot."

"And they cost twelve, and are as good as new; no, sir, I want five thousand dollars."

"They ish not wort it."

"Then don't buy them; good-morning, sir."

"I ish gives you four t'ousandt."

"Five!"

"Yes, for all, mit t'e furnitures too."

"The other sale has nothing to do with this: five thousand dollars, I say."

"Vera vell, but it ish ruin me."

"You will double it when you sell them, as you know; here, I will draw up this paper of transfer, and you pay me the money."

The papers were quickly drawn up and signed, and the money paid over, and Kittie told the Jew to await her in the sitting-room for awhile.

Half an hour he waited, and then he started to his feet as a young man entered, clad in the uniform of a midshipman.

"Vell, who ish you?" asked the Jew, who had not expected any one being in the next room but Kittie.

"I am a friend of the lady from whom you made the purchases awhile since, and I leave you now in charge of everything."

"But the ladish, vere ish she?" asked the Jew.

"She has gone. Good-by, old Shylock," and the midshipman hurried toward the door, carrying a traveling-bag in his hand.

"Hold on, mine friend, dat pag pelongs to me."

"I guess not; it contains my slight wardrobe and fortune."

"But I ish puy all dat vash here."

"Not all, for I am here and so is my traveling-bag; good-day, sir."

The Jew gazed at the slender form, but there was something in the firm mouth, seen beneath the dark silken mustache, and the flash of the black eyes, that prevented him trying conclusions with the youth; but he said boldly:

"Let me see vat you ish have in t'e pag."

"You have your jewels before you on the table; there stands your silver service, and in that trunk and closet are the dresses you bought, and the furniture I cannot certainly carry off; are you satisfied, for I want no scene here?"

"I ish not satisfy."

"Now are you?"

Dropping the traveling-bag the youth raised his hands, and first the mustache and then a dark wig were removed, and the beautiful face and golden hair of Kittie were revealed, though now her curls had been cut off, and her fair skin had been bronzed to the hue of a sailor.

"Mine Abraham, Isaac ant Jacob!" exclaimed the Jew.

"Well, Shylock, if I have deceived your avaricious eyes, I can deceive any one; now are you satisfied?"

"I ish pe satisfy. Mine gracious! mine gracious! vat for you ish do dot?"

"That is a secret that money cannot buy, though you'd make an offer if you thought you could realize a large profit on it; I leave you, Jew, to your own reflections," and, with a quivering lip, Kittie replaced her wig and mustache carefully, cast one lingering glance around the room, and departed forever from the home where she had known so much of pleasure and of pain.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SMUGGLERS' RETREAT.

"THIS is the door; now to follow the instructions in his letter, for should I make a mistake all would be lost."

The speaker was a young man, possessing a slender form, and clad in a naval uniform, and wearing a heavy cloak.

In one hand he carried a heavy carpet sack, and with the other he knocked loudly three times.

A moment passed, and then a slide in the door was drawn back, and a hoarse voice asked:

"How do you come?"

In a firm tone the youth replied:

"I come from the land of distress."

"Whither bound?" was the next query from within.

"To the glad sea waves," was the answer of the young man.

The belts were now drawn back, the door opened, and the young man stepped within the dimly lighted hall.

Before him stood a huge, rough-looking individual who eyed him closely, and seemed rather surprised at his uniform, but asked politely:

"You wish to go to the Social Hall, sir?"

"Yes, I come with news for the men from the captain."

"They'll be glad to get it, for the captain told us to expect glad tidings soon; this way, sir, please."

Along a narrow hallway, with a lantern in his hand, the man led the visitor, until they stopped at a seeming wall, but which turned by a touch, on a spring, disclosing a pair of stairs leading to the depths below.

Down these they went and then along another long, arched tunnel, rather than hallway, and the young man knew that it was under the ground.

From the further end voices were heard, and soon a door was thrown open by the guide who called out in a loud tone:

"Boys, here is a gentleman with news from the captain."

It was a trying ordeal for the disguised Kittie, as the reader has doubtlessly discovered the supposed youth to be; but with choking back of her emotions, she went forward into the subterranean chamber, which was beneath the street, for the rumble of wheels on the stone pave were heard directly overhead.

Around a large table sat a number of men, engaged in drinking, card-playing and talking, and one and all looked up as the stranger approached, while one arose and said:

"Lieutenant Darrell, I suppose, sir?"

"No sir, but I come in the place of Lieutenant Darrell, who is not able to join you, and from Captain Ringold, who desires that you all come to his vessel, in twos and threes, for he wishes to sail shortly after midnight! She lies off Catherine Slip."

"Ha! he has a vessel then?" asked the man.

"Yes, a beautiful craft—the Will-o'-the-Wisp," was the quiet answer, and a cheer greeted the words.

"Come, sir, have a drink with us: you will soon find us out, so let us know the name of our new lieutenant, for such you are doubtless," said the man who had first spoken.

"My name is Hunter."

"A good name; a toast, lads, to Lieutenant Hunter."

The toast was drank with cheers, and the supposed youth waved adieu and turned away, some of the remarks regarding him he over-hearing, as he retraced his way back through the tunnel.

"A likely chap," said one.

"There's fire in his eye, and he's a cool 'un, I'll wager," cried another. "A leetle dandified, and rather slight in build, but he's got nerve or ther capt'in wouldn't freeze to him."

These remarks were enough to show the disguised girl that she had not made an unfavorable impression upon the smugglers, which they were.

"Now to face the lion in his den; if I pass the ordeal of his eyes I am safe; if not his life will be the forfeit," muttered Hunter, turning from the door, and wending his way in the direction of Catherine slip.

With little difficulty the dock was found, off which lay the really beautiful vessel Will-o'-the-Wisp, and being a good sailor, his eye recognized the craft he had seen once before—the yacht of Bartley Livingstone, that had

carried Captain Mainball to his death in his duel with Ivan Ringold.

A sailor was pacing the deck, and hailing him, a boat was sent ashore, and the supposed youth was ushered into the cabin.

Upon a lounge, smoking, and evidently plotting some devilry, lay Ivan Ringold, attired in an undress uniform.

"Well, Darrell, is it you?" he asked lazily, half rising.

"No, sir, it is not Lieutenant Darrell; but are you Captain Ringold?" was the calm response.

Seeing the uniform, and a strange face, Ivan Ringold at first believed he had been betrayed and sprang quickly to his feet, at the same time drawing a pistol from his breast pocket, while he cried sternly:

"And who the devil are you?"

"I am a friend of Lieutenant Darrell, Captain Ringold; he sends you this letter, which will explain," and gaining courage, at seeing his first glance had not penetrated her disguise, she held out the letter, which she had herself written in a clever imitation of Darrell's handwriting, and which the Smuggler Chief took and read.

"Mr. Hunter, I am glad to see you, sir, and as Darrell recommends you so highly, you shall step into his shoes as my luff; I am sorry that he could not come, but hope he can join us at some future time."

"Yes, sir, I trust that he may; but you are very kind, sir, to give me a position."

"No thanks are necessary; Darrell says that, like us, you have met with misfortune in the regular navy, and was dismissed; may I ask your offense?"

"Striking my superior officer, sir, for insulting me."

"Ah! I killed my superior officer for just such an offense; I heard of your affair, Hunter; but did you go by the Den, as Darrell said you would do?"

"I did, sir, and the men will soon begin to drop aboard."

"Good! I don't want this yacht to be here at daybreak, for I got it by strategy, from one whom I have a grudge against."

"He wanted a crew for a short cruise, and myself and men applied, and when at sea some thirty miles we set Mr. Livingstone and his party adrift in an open boat, and I ran back here for my men."

"Are you going privateering?" innocently questioned Kittie.

"I am going on a cruise that must end well for us all; you see I have been smuggling in a quiet way of late, but I think I can make a fortune under a black flag—"

"A pirate!"

"Oh, you must not look surprised, Hunter; these are troublous times, a war is commencing between Great Britain and the States, and little acts such as I commit, will not be noticed by either Government."

"You see, smuggling pays well, and I shall keep it up; but whenever the chance occurs to capture a prize, either from under the cross of Great Britain, or the stars and stripes of the United States, why well and good; do you fear to sail without a commission?"

"I fear nothing, Captain Ringold."

"That speech rings well; but who the devil do you so remind me of?"

"I am sure I cannot tell, sir," and Kittie laughed.

"It is a fancied resemblance, or real, I know not which; but to whom?"

"I am ready for duty, sir."

"Good! but I am anxious about a letter I dispatched up-town, asking to have my desk sent to me."

"Ah! I had forgotten; I met a man on the dock, who gave me this desk and package for you, as he said he feared to trust himself on board again."

"The devil he did; yes, this is my desk, and here is something else Kittie has sent me; was there no note?"

"Yes, it is pinned there to the bundle."

"Ah!" and Ivan Ringold opened the note, and as he read he little dreamed whose eyes were looking upon him, devouring his every expression; but who indeed could have traced any resemblance in the black-haired, brown-faced, mustachioed young man in all appearances, to the blonde, curly-headed, lily-complexioned Kittie Moore?

As he read she knew what his eyes were falling on, and she marked the effect of each word.

She had simply written the story of their meeting, their love, and his desertion, and not a word of upbraiding was there in all, only one little sentence that she saw he could not pass lightly over, and that was:

"One of these days, Ivan, we will meet again, and then it will be *your* turn to plead for mercy from *me*, and it will be *my* time to refuse."

"A letter from an old flame; women are great devils, Hunter, when you arouse their jealousy; but this love I will drop now, as it is an old one, and I am on with the new, for to-morrow night I land on the Sound at Bartley Livingstone's elegant home, and carry off Laura Mainball, for he is her guardian now, and hopes to marry her."

"Will you kidnap her?" calmly asked Kittie.

"Yes; she has never gotten over her love for me, and I can capture her for myself, and give the men the silver plate, of which there is a vast quantity; but come on deck, and we will see if the crew are coming on board," and Ivan Ringold led the way, little dreaming that he had made a *confidante* of one who now lived only to run him to earth.

CHAPTER XII.

A TRAITOR.

THE new moon had gone down beyond the Westchester hills, and darkness settled upon the land and water, while a silence that could be felt reigned supreme.

Over the waters of Long Island Sound, barely rippled by the light breeze from seaward, a beautiful vessel was gliding along under clouds of canvas, and heading in toward the dark shores, at a point some miles above the city of New York, where, even at that early day, men of fortune had built themselves grand houses, in which to spend the warm months of the year, to rest in luxury, away from the turmoil and business cares of the metropolis.

"Head into that inlet, helmsman; yonder is the mansion," said an officer, who had been quietly pacing to and fro, alternately glancing at his vessel, then up and down the Sound, and at his crew, who numbered some forty men, all silently awaiting for the events to turn up, be they what they might.

"I see the white walls of the mansion, through the trees yonder, Captain Ringold," said a young officer approaching.

"Yes, the house stands back a few hundred yards from the water, and is a superb place; head for that large tree, helmsman, for there is good water clear in, and Mr. Hunter shorten sail, so that we will drift in."

The orders were obeyed promptly, and ten minutes after the vessel was made fast to a green bank, and the crew stood in readiness to land.

"Clyde, you remain on board with half the men, but be ready to come, if I call for aid, though I do not anticipate much trouble; also keep a sharp look-out for that accursed cruiser that chased us before dark."

"Yes, sir," answered the young sailor, whom Captain Ringold had addressed as Clyde.

"You, Hunter, I wish to go with me: I'll look after the girl with my party, and you take care of the silver plate for the boys; you know where it is, as I gave you a diagram of the house; now let us be off."

Silently the band moved away through the beautiful grounds, and as they drew nearer the mansion, separated into two parties, Ringold

and his men going toward the rear of the dwelling, and the balance to the front door.

It was certainly a grand mansion, large and comfortable, and around it were ornamental grounds that had cost a small fortune to decorate.

One light glimmered from the east wing, and no other sign of life was visible.

"My man has done his work well, for had he not poisoned the dogs, they would have attacked us ere this," said Ringold.

"There stands some one now, captain," whispered a sailor.

All at once halted, and the captain gave a low whistle, and the form approached.

"Is it you, Ricketts?"

"Ay, captain, and I am glad you have come, for I am not a success as a head waiter; I spilt the soup all over a lady dining with Miss Mainhall to-day, have lost some dozen silver spoons and forks, and a purse being missed to-night; I am certain of my discharge to-morrow," and the man, dressed as a butler came forward and joined the party.

"Had I not come to-night, Ricketts, you would have stolen the house, I fear: now can you let us into the mansion?"

"Oh, yes, captain, I keep the keys, you know."

"How many servants are there?"

"The coachman, groom, stable-boy, gardener and my *aide de salon* in the dining-room; then half a dozen girls and the cook. I am really glad you have come, captain, for I was falling in love with Miss Mainhall's maid."

"Quit your nonsense, Ricketts, and show us into the rear hall; then go through and open the door for Lieutenant Hunter and his men, and the house is ours," said Captain Ringold.

"Come!" simply said the pretended butler, who had obtained a situation in the household of Bartley Livingstone, just to betray it, and he led the way to the rear entrance and in ten minutes after twenty daring men stood beneath the roof, and little dreamed the inmates of danger.

"Miss Mainhall has not retired, captain; that wing is devoted to her, and half an hour ago she was writing," whispered Ricketts.

"I will seek her there; you, Hunter, look after the plate and valuables, but do not use force with the servants unless necessary."

As he spoke Ivan Ringold moved away and entering a hall leading to the east wing, tapped lightly at a door at the further end.

"Is that you, Ricketts?" asked a sweet voice within.

"Yes, Miss Mainhall," replied Ringold, imitating to perfection the voice of the traitor butler.

"What do you wish at this time at night, sir?"

"I have found the purse; it must have been dropped in getting out of the carriage," said Ringold, remembering the lost purse which Ricketts had spoken of.

A rustling of silk was heard within, the door opened and Ivan Ringold sprang into the room, and Laura Mainhall was face to face with the man who had slain her father.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MIDNIGHT MARAUDERS.

WHEN Laura Mainhall saw who it was that confronted her, she sprang back in alarm, and with a cry upon her lips; but quickly recovering herself she said, with intense anger in her tones:

"Ivan Ringold, how dare you come here?"

"Laura, listen to me."

"Not one word, sir, go!" and she pointed to the door.

"I will not go; I came here to see you, Laura, to have a talk with you, to beg that you forgive—"

"Never! no, never can I forgive you for what you did."

"Oh, Laura! I implore you to listen to me; I am a wretched being; a man haunted by the

cruelest memories by day and night, and whose love for you has never known change."

"Silence, sir! and leave me, ere I call my servants to throw you from the house."

"Your servants! doubtless they will soon be, as rumor has it, that you intend to marry your guardian."

"Will you leave this house, sir?" she haughtily demanded.

"Not until you have heard me."

"I care not for what you would say."

"You must, you shall!"

"This to me? Lita! Lita!"

The cry brought a half-dressed, sleepy-looking maid in from the next room, who gave one glance at the stranger and woke up suddenly, for she gave one shriek and fled.

"Are your other servants as brave as Lita?" sneered Ivan Ringold.

"Mr. Ringold, my being unprotected should make you show mercy to me, and depart."

"Will you listen to me, first?"

"What have you to say, sir?" and she dropped back into the chair by the table.

"First, I would tell you that I love you."

"And your love is an insult to me."

"Ha! what mean you, Laura Mainhall?" he cried in anger.

"I mean, sir, that when you look at me, you should see between us the form of my dead father, whom your hand placed in his grave."

"He insulted me, and—"

"And you killed him. Oh, God! what a bitter memory for me, Ivan Ringold."

"Once, in the long ago, I loved you; nay, you fascinated me, that was all, for it was not love; but I would have fled with you had I not found out your true character, as did my poor father."

"He severed our engagement, and told you of your evil deeds, and what he said cost him his life."

"Now, as that bitter memory is gradually fading in the distance, you appear before me and tell me that you love me."

"And I do, Laura; for you I will give up my wild career; I have a fine vessel, and, in this war now breaking out, I will win a name that will restore me in honor to the service; but I need your help, I need your love, and I have come to ask you to go on my vessel with me—"

"Never! never! never! leave me, sir, for I detest, I hate you; ay, I could kill you to avenge my poor father."

The man fairly started at the hatred that blazed in her eyes; but finding that entreaty served him not, he said in his quiet way:

"Very well, Miss Mainhall, if you will not go willingly, you shall unwillingly."

The beautiful girl uttered a cry and dropped back in her chair, just as a loud shout was heard without, followed by several pistol-shots.

"Ha! you come then in the guise of a pirate, as well as my father's murderer?" cried Laura Mainhall, with intense scorn and indignation.

"Come, captain; one of the servants escaped and met a company of soldiers on the march to the city, and they are coming," cried Ricketts, dashing into the room.

"To the boats then; I will follow," ordered Ringold, and, as the man departed, he sprang forward and seized the maiden in his strong arms.

"You are mine, Laura Mainhall, if I have to fight a regiment of soldiers."

She was powerless to resist his great strength, but uttered a piercing cry for help, just as he was bearing her to the door.

"Hold on, Captain Ringold!"

The chief halted quickly, and a curse sprang to his lips, for in his path he saw one who evidently had some determined purpose in view, in ordering him to halt.

"In the devil's name, what mean you?"

"I mean that you shall release that lady, sir."

It was the supposed lieutenant who spoke, and a pistol covered the heart of Ivan Ringold, and the hand that held it was as firm as iron.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAD SAILOR'S LEGACY.

"WHAT! are you a traitor, sir?" cried Ivan Ringold, raising the drawn sword he held in his right hand, while he clutched Laura Mainhall in his left.

"No, I am one, Ivan Ringold, who has tracked you to your death; release that maiden, or I will kill you," was the stern response.

"I never will, sir, and as for you, I will strike you down," and Ringold moved forward with stern determination to keep his word.

"Hold! I command you to release that maiden."

"Never!"

"Then, Ivan Ringold, die at the hands of her who has twice saved your life."

The pistol flashed, the report echoed through the room, and with a cry of pain, Ivan Ringold released Laura Mainhall, who quickly sprang aside, just as her captor staggered forward to meet his foe, while from his lips came the cry, as he fell to the floor:

"Oh God! You are Kittie Moore."

"I am."

But Kittie could say no more, for, without was heard tramping feet, and she bounded from the room, and leaving the mansion by the front entrance, fled across the lawn toward the retreating crew, who had nearly gained the yacht with their booty.

Springing on board she cried in ringing tones:

"Cast off, men, for your captain is dead; I saw him fall. 'Lively, lively, if you would keep your necks out of a halter.'"

The crew needed no second command, but went to work with a will, the sharp bows swung round, the sails were spread, and the yacht moved away from the shore, just as the company of soldiers came at a double-quick across the lawn, in the chase of the pirates who had fled before their approach.

"Which way shall we head, captain?" asked the helmsman, when the yacht had gained the open Sound.

"Head for Montauk Point, my man, and send Mr. Clyde into the cabin to me," was the order of the young girl who had suddenly found herself in command of an outlaw craft.

Pacing to and fro, her eyes downcast, her lips firm set, for Kittie was suffering the deepest anguish of heart, for her hand had, she believed, avenged the wrong done her by the man whom she had so dearly loved, and by whom she had been so cruelly deceived.

But, at the entrance of Clyde, a handsome young sailor, she concealed her emotion and said:

"Mr. Clyde, you are now second in command of this vessel, for Ivan Ringold was killed, and I am your captain."

"Thank you, Captain Hunter for the honor sir, though I am sorry, for Captain Ringold's fate. I wish we could have saved him."

"It was impossible; he attempted to kidnap Miss Mainhall, and was shot, while I escaped just in the nick of time."

"You attend to the working of the vessel, for I have certain plans on hand which I wish to work out."

"Yes, sir; have you any other orders?"

"Head for Montauk Point."

"Ay, ay, sir," and with a salute Calvin Clyde left the cabin, and the woman was left alone with her bitter thoughts.

For some moments she seemed almost overcome with her emotions; but at last assuming control over herself, she turned to the table, on which was the desk she had brought to Ivan Ringold.

It was locked, and the key was in its owner's pocket; but her sword-blade broke it open, and a number of papers, some money, a few jewels, and a tin box were revealed.

This latter she took up, and said in a low tone:

"How strange that this should have come into my possession as it has, and how well I

remember the day he took it from that poor Mad Sailor.

"Ah me! I must forget that part, or my heart will break.

"How strange too, that Ivan Ringold, never sought to discover the secret this little box holds; but perhaps he did, and failed.

"But I shall not fail, for yesterday, when I saw the contents of the box, I vowed to discover this Montauk mystery, and I will."

Touching a spring the tin box flew open, and a paper was revealed, time-worn, soiled, and traced with various lines, and marked with dots, while beneath was a written key.

It seemed to be a rudely drawn map of some locality on the seaside, and that many a long year had passed since the lines were traced there could be no doubt.

At the head was written in a bold hand:

"THE MONTAUK TREASURE."

Then followed in smaller writing:

"Buried by Captain Kyd, November 10th 1698."

The map was beneath, with Long Island Sound on the left, Montauk Point at the top, and hills to the right, with a certain grave-shaped mark to indicate the exact locality of the buried treasure.

With this map came a letter, the paper and writing proving it to be of far more recent date, and it read as follows:

"I, Augustin Denton, though discarded by the one woman of my love, Grace Carroll, now Mrs. Andrew Moore, do hereby bequeath to her children the inclosed map, which will direct them to a fortune, as it is the treasure of the Pirate Kyd, and consists of untold riches in gold, silver, and precious stones, and the right to which was given to me by one whom I befriended, and who died in my arms, when on his way to seek the buried wealth.

"As I feel my brain growing wild, and I have no desire for riches, I write this letter, begging that if aught should happen to me, before I stand face to face with the woman I still love, that the finder will give into her hands the map accompanying.

"Amboy, Sept. 15th, 1811. AUGUSTIN DENTON."

"Why, this date was but a week before the vessel on which he was a passenger, was wrecked on our coast; yes, she was bound from Amboy to Salem, and the wreck unseated his brain forever; poor man, he too had a life of sorrow, though I cannot believe that my good mother intentionally wrecked his happiness— Ah! here is some more writing nearly faded out, and she read aloud:

"If other hands than Kyd's dig for this treasure, may they palsy, and Satan's curse rest upon them forever."

"Now I understand why Ivan Ringold, did not dig for the treasure; he was superstitious and feared the Pirate's curse; but I do not, and, as it is my inheritance from poor Augustin Denton I will have it—ah! here is another line of writing," and this she read aloud:

"This map was dug from a grave in Amboy, in which was buried Kyd's treasure."

"This is evidently in the hand of the finder, who, when he died gave it to Denton.

"In faith, the Pirate's curse does seem fatal, for first the finder of this map died, then Denton, and to-night Ivan Ringold; so be it, in the grave there is rest for me, only let me leave my parents rich in their declining years, for they deserve that much of me."

She put the map and letter carefully back in the desk, and then ascended to the deck.

The dawn was just breaking, and the crew were leaning over the bulwarks, lazily looking at the Long Island shores, as the Will-o'-the-Wisp swept along under an eight-knot breeze.

As she trod the quarter-deck every eyes fell upon her, and raising her cap, she faced the crew, and in clear, distinct tones, said:

"Men, I do not care to sail under false colors, nor under the flag that Captain Ringold intended to fly at the peak of this vessel; but I intend to cruise in the Will-o'-the-Wisp until I accomplish a certain end, and you shall all be generously paid for your services.

"I am not what I seem, for I am a woman."

She paused, and for a moment watched the nervous movement of the crew, but, other than

a slight exclamation, no word was spoken, and she went on:

"Yes, a poor, deceived, unhappy woman, but one who has been a sailor from her earliest girlhood, and who will prove that she is fully capable of commanding this craft and her crew.

"Allow me to introduce myself as your commander, Captain Kit, of the Will-o'-the-Wisp."

She took off her false mustache as she spoke, threw her black wig upon the deck at her feet, and the beautiful face was revealed, and like a flash won its way to the hearts of the rough men who stood before her.

"Three cheers for the Girl Smuggler, Captain Kit, the Will-o'-the-Wisp," cried Calvin Clyde, and he setting the example the cheers were given with a will, and the crew acknowledged a mere girl in years as their leader.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TREASURE HUNTRESS.

UPON the bold headland of what is known as Montauk Point, the eastern end of Long Island, there was still visible a few years ago, the ruins of what had once been a stout log cabin.

There it stood in the midst of a dense grove of trees, and in the vale, at the base of the hill, were rude huts, the homes of half a hundred bold spirits who dwelt there when not at sea, for they were seamen.

The cabin on the hill was the land home of Captain Kit, when she was not on board her fleet vessel, that lay so snugly at anchor in a secret inlet not far away, and so overhung by trees, that its tapering mast could not be seen or its graceful hull be discerned by an ordinary observer at half its length.

Landing on Montauk Point, the day after the attack on the home of Bartley Livingstone, Captain Kit, as I will now call her, had gone alone to search the locality of the buried treasure.

But an hour's hunt had proven to her most decidedly that the face of the land had greatly changed, during the years that lay between 1698 and 1812; in fact in the hundred and more years that had gone by, forests had sprung up where once were open lands, and woodlands had become meadows.

Selecting a spot as near as possible to where she thought the buried treasure lay, Captain Kit set her men to work to build her cabin home, and becoming each day more attached to her, they worked with such right good will that they made it a most comfortable abode.

To their surprise as soon as the "captain's quarters," and the "camp cabins" were built, the men received a goodly present all round of gold, and this raised their girl commander still more in their estimation.

Thus several months passed away, and in cruising about the Sound, sometimes running up or down the coast outside, and at anchor in the inlet the time was passed, the crew to their surprise regularly receiving their pay, yet wondering deeply among themselves from whence the money came, for not a yard of silk had been smuggled through, not a thing had been sold to the English blockading squadron either off Sandy Hook, or Montauk Point, and they could not comprehend what was the object of their girl commander's cruise.

True, several times she had run almost to Hell Gate, and anchoring in a secluded inlet, had gone from the Will-o'-the-Wisp for a day or two, and the crew surmised that she had gone to New York.

Some said she was in the service of the American Government watching the British fleet, and others of her men would swear that she was in the English service, watching the Americans, and yet the Will-o'-the-Wisp always sped away like the wind at the sight of a vessel of war under either flag, and had several times never taken a Yankee merchantman when in her power.

That there was some deep mystery regard-

ing her hanging about Montauk Point was certain, yet what was it?

That riddle no one could answer, not even Calvin Clyde, the young lieutenant, who had fallen over head and ears in love with his fair commander.

That the strange movements of the Will-o'-the-Wisp should attract attention at New York, was not to be wondered at, for fishermen, merchant vessels running the blockade, and armed cruisers, reported seeing her hovering in the Sound at night, yet seldom visible by day, and reported her as a craft that could almost fly over the waters, carrying sail enough for a brig, and armed with two pivot guns, one on the fore-castle, one on the stern, and with a crew of half a hundred men.

Not knowing what her real character was, the Will-o'-the-Wisp was soon reported as a smuggler, and it leaked out that Captain Kit was a woman, she soon became known as the Girl Smuggler of the Sound.

Time and again cruisers, that could be spared from more important duties, were sent in pursuit of the Will-o'-the-Wisp, but it seemed impossible to catch her, and her fame spread the more, and some looked upon the fleet craft as a phantom.

But the men of the Will-o'-the-Wisp knew well that there was no phantom business about it, and that the skill and pluck of their girl commander alone had saved them from capture on scores of occasions, and they fairly worshiped her, and obeyed her slightest wish as though it were a stern order; but still they regarded her as a mystery past finding out.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTAIN KIT CAPTURES A PRIZE.

ONE day, when standing on the cliff near her cabin, watching the sun rise, Captain Kit noticed a small lugger standing close inshore, and being without a bowsprit, it was evident that her crew were coming in to get a spar.

"But such a lubberly thing as that cannot run by the British fleet, so where can she be going?" muttered Captain Kit.

Noticing about where the lugger would land, Captain Kit hastily ran down the hillside to the camp of her crew, and sending some of them to board the Will-o'-the-Wisp, to give chase to the lugger, should she try to escape, with the others she secreted herself in the woods just as the dull bows of the strange craft touched the bank.

Three men at once sprung ashore and made fast, while two more remained on the lugger, one of whom called out:

"Find a spar, quick, boys, and let us pull out, for they do say that Captain Kit the Smuggler has his haunts hereabout."

"You are right, sir; I am Captain Kit," and followed by half a score of dashing fellows Captain Kit sprung on board the lugger.

Resistance was useless, and the surprised crew knew it, and in a minute almost the lugger was a prize, while, turning to the frightened skipper, Captain Kit said:

"Well, captain, which way bound?"

"To Boston, with produce," was the surly reply.

"Ah! do the New York markets supply the Bostonians now with game, meats, fowl and vegetables?"

"If they can get a good price for them."

"True, my gallant skipper, but they cannot do so, and besides you would be captured by the British fleet before you had gone five leagues from here."

"We have to take our chances, sir."

"I see; well you take a certainty in this old tub; I'll trouble you for the papers you may have about you," and Captain Kit looked sternly into the man's face, who answered doggedly:

"I haven't got any papers."

"Ah! then you are a pirate."

The skipper and his crew turned pale at this and Captain Kit called to one of his under officers:

"Dolon, go in and search this man's cabin,

and then find out just what cargo he has on board."

"Ay, ay, Captain Kit," and the officer obeyed, and returning in a quarter of an hour reported that there were bundles of New York papers, a bag of letters addressed to the admiral of the British blockading squadron, and stores enough, in the shape of produce, meats and fowls, to last the fleet for weeks.

"Well, skipper, you see what a trap you have run yourself into; here, Dolon, take him and his men on board the Will-o'-the-Wisp and put them in irons."

"Oh Lord! You are then Captain Kit?" cried the captain.

"I am."

"Then I can serve you well; here is a letter for you, given me some time ago, but I knew not how to reach you, except by coming hereabout, and I wasn't anxious to do that, as they said you was something of a phantom," and the skipper placed a sealed letter in the hands of the girl commander, who at once broke the seal and read it.

"Do you know the contents of this letter, skipper?" she asked, angrily.

"I do know about what it is."

"Well, it condemns you still more, for I am not what you and the English admiral seem to believe, for he wishes me to turn traitor to my country, and become a spy, for which I am offered a lieutenantancy in the British navy, and a large sum of money—a tempting offer for a woman, but one which she scorns.

"Now, captain, I want some information from you, and a letter to the admiral; if you refuse, I'll have you hanged, so take your choice."

"I am ruined, ruined! I might as well die," groaned the man.

"All right. Kendrick, get a halyard and string this traitor up to—"

"No, no, no! Spare my life and I will do all that you wish."

"You are wise. Now come into your cabin with me."

The skipper obeyed, and ten minutes after Captain Kit called Dolon and ordered him to take him and his men to the Will-o'-the-Wisp.

"Kendrick!"

"Ay, ay, Captain Kit," and in answer to his commander's call the boatswain appeared.

"Take out of this lugger about two-thirds of its cargo, and send it to the cabins, for the boys shall have a treat."

"Ay, ay, Captain Kit."

"Then put some of the men to cutting and rigging a bowsprit on the lugger, and then you and four others report to me, for I shall run out to-night to the British fleet."

The man looked surprised, but made no dissenting reply, and late in the afternoon, no vessel being in sight in the direction of New York, the lugger got under way and headed toward the blockading squadron anchored a couple of leagues off Montauk Point, and which consisted of a frigate, the flag-ship, two sloops-of-war and a brig, all of them keeping close watch upon the Sound route to New York.

CHAPTER XVII.

BEARDING THE BRITISH LION.

"ADMIRAL, there is a lugger standing directly for us, sir."

"It is doubtless the Spy, returning with provisions and news for us, Lennox," and the British naval commander, went on sipping his sherry, and smoking a Spanish cigarette, while Captain Lennox returned to the deck.

Half an hour after a midshipman entered the cabin of the English frigate, and said, as he saluted:

"A Yankee to see you, sir."

"Send him down, Reefer," and he added: "by Neptune! now I will have something to eat, for I have been most starved on sea fare."

A moment after the midshipman entered, followed by a youth of perhaps eighteen, with long, blonde soap locks, parted by his ears, and hanging down to his neck, a standing collar and

stock that looked as though it choked him, and a suit of clothes half sailor and half landsman.

"Well, sir, are you the figure-head off of some Yankee frigate?" asked the admiral, greatly amused at the appearance and make-up of his visitor.

"I be Josiah Ledbetter, stranger, an' my dad sent me, seein' as heow he c'u'dn't come," answered the strange youth, not deigning to take the tall white hat from off his head.

"Ah! you are Skipper Ledbetter's son; 'good! and you have brought us provisions?"

"Yas, stranger; a heap lot o' 'em, only not as much as dad laid out fer tew fetch, as ther was sneakers ontew us, an' we hed tew sail."

"Very well, you shall be well paid for what you did bring; did Skipper Ledbetter not send me any letters and papers?"

"I has a few papers with readin' stuff in 'em, stranger, but ther letters was not writ, dad said; but when I goes back he'll fetch you some, an' only sent me 'cause he feared you'd be anxious."

"Well, get your provisions on board the frigate, and let me know what it is all worth, and I will pay you."

"I thank 'ee, stranger; and dad said as heow ef you wanted fer ter writ him a letter, ter gin it ter me, with full instructions."

"I do wish to send a letter of importance back; but suppose you are captured?"

"Oh, I be up tew snuff; I'd chaw it up afore they'd get it."

"Then I will write it; so go on deck and unload your lugger."

The strange youth obeyed, and in half an hour was back again in the admiral's cabin.

"Well, my young Yankee, here is your pay for your produce," and the admiral shoved over to the youth a liberal sum in gold, which was pocketed with the utmost greed.

"Oh here be a letter for you from dad," suddenly exclaimed the young skipper, producing a greasy and crumpled piece of paper, which the admiral took with evident disgust.

"Ah yes, it is but a request from your paternal relative for me to send any letter by you I may wish, and telling me he will be out again within the month; here is my letter, and deliver it to your father, who knows just where to take it."

"And this is for yourself," and the admiral gave the youth a handful of gold, which he deposited in an inner receptacle of some kind, called a pocket, while the letter he placed in his tall hat.

"Suppose that elongated beaver falls overboard, Josiah; what then?"

"Oh, it'll swim."

"But my letter will be lost."

"Then I'll put it here," and he placed it in one leg of his rawhide boots, and soon after was heading back in his lugger for Montauk Point.

"Well, Dolon," suddenly called out the supposed Yankee youth, who was at the tiller, "did you get any news?"

"Much, Captain Kit, for I learned of the whereabouts of most of the English fleet on this northern coast; you see, they can't keep secrets from sailors, for if they sail with sealed orders it will leak out someway."

"And I did well with the admiral, for he paid me twenty times what the lugger's cargo would bring in New York, and gave me a letter which I know is important, for it is to some British spy in New York."

"And are you going to run down to the city?"

"Yes, as soon as we run into the Secret Inlet I will board the Will-o'-the-Wisp, and sail for New York, for I may have important news that time may spoil."

"Well," thought Dolon, "this is a discovery, for never before did a man in the captain's crew, know whether she was British or American."

"So be it, she is on the right side, that is certain, and I'll have a sweet morsel for the lads, ears."

"Dolon!"

"Well, Captain Kit."

"You need not speak of what was done on board the English frigate to-night to any one."

"All right, captain."

"And, as you and your comrades took the risk with me, this gold is yours: divide it among you," and Captain Kit emptied her pockets.

"Whew! that morsel of news is not to be served up, sure; well, here is something just as good," was Dolon's thoughts, and he called his four comrades on the lugger, to share the admiral's gold with him, and they could hardly be restrained from breaking out in a cheer for their generous young commander.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAPTAIN KIT MAKES A VISIT.

"WELL, young man, you desire to see me on an important matter, I hear?"

The speaker was the American Commandant at New York, and the one he addressed was a handsome young man, with dark hair and mustache, and dressed in a dark blue uniform, partially concealed by a heavy cloak.

It was none other than Captain Kit, who had run the Will-o'-the-Wisp into a secure hiding-place on the Sound coast of Long Island, and come on to the city in a small boat, with Dolon and Kendrick as oarsmen.

"Yes, general, I sought you to give you important information," was the quiet reply.

"You are a naval officer I see, and—by Jupiter! a captain though a boy in years," said the commandant, as Captain Kit threw aside her cloak, displaying the rank on her epaulettes.

At the remark of the officer she smiled and answered:

"Yes, sir, if commanding a vessel and a gallant crew makes me a captain, I am one, though I hold no commission."

"Ha! sailing under false colors, young man?"

"I suppose so, sir; but I came not here to be catechized regarding myself, but to give information."

"You certainly are bold, sir; but first tell me who it is I address."

"First promise me, sir, not to detain me, but to allow me to go, if the news I bring causes you to feel that I will do no harm to the American cause," was the bold request, and it had an effect upon the general, who said angrily:

"In faith, but you are free-spoken, to tell me what to do."

"I mean no disrespect, sir; I came here at a risk, after running a greater one to go on board the English fleet."

"By Heaven! you are a spy."

"If so it please you, sir; I have information I gained for you, while in disguise on the frigate of the British admiral, lying off Montauk Point."

"Ha! and again I ask, who are you?"

"And, sir, I again ask that you promise not to detain me if I tell you, provided you are convinced I am a true American."

The general paced up and down the room several times, and then halting in front of the supposed youth said sternly:

"Young man, if your information is valuable, and I am convinced that you are not playing a double part, I will permit you to go free; if to the contrary, I will have you hanged as a spy."

"I'll risk the hanging, general. I am Captain Kit, the Will-o'-the-Wisp," was the smiling response.

And the words fell like a bombshell upon the general, for he dropped his hand upon his sword, and gazed into her face with blazing eyes.

At last he said, sternly:

"Impossible! Captain Kit I know to be a woman."

"And I am a woman, general," and Captain Kit removed quickly her black wig and mustache.

Before him the general saw a beautiful face, sad and rather stern, yet still lovely in every

feature and womanly, while he now noticed the elegance of her slender, graceful form, and the tiny hands and feet.

"By my faith! you are a woman; but it is impossible that you can be the famous Captain Kit, the smuggler, half-pirate, and the devil only knows what."

"You see before you, sir, Captain Kit, called the Will-o'-the-Wisp, but not one act of outlawry, other than cruising without a commission, have I ever committed, and my words can be proven."

"Accident placed me in command of a vessel, commanded by a man who wronged me, and whom I hated so deeply that I, as I then believed, took his life; but he recovered from the wound I gave him, escaped from the prison he was sent to for his crimes, and has yet to meet me face to face and answer for the wrongs done me."

"Cruising in the Sound, I have been called a smuggler, pirate, and all else bad; but I have done no act of wrong against my country, and have been seeking only to serve certain ends that can harm no one."

"When I accomplish that purpose, sir, Captain Kit will disappear, and the Will-o'-the-Wisp never more be seen at night flying over the waters, and along the shores of the Sound."

"Now, sir, you know who, and what I am, for I have told you the truth."

"You are a strange creature," said the general, gazing earnestly at her, and that he was impressed by her appearance and words it was evident.

At last he said, kindly:

"Be seated, my Lady Captain, and tell me what brought you here?"

In a few words Captain Kit told the story of her capture of the lugger, loaded with supplies for the British fleet, and handed over the bundle of papers and bag of letters, which were taken and rapidly read by the officer.

"My girl, you have indeed rendered valuable service, for you have discovered several spies I have long wished to lay my hands upon."

"And I find that this is not the first, but the third trip of this lugger, under Skipper Ledbetter to the British fleet; you have taken a prize, sir, I mean madam," and the general bowed politely.

"I am glad I made the capture, sir, but I took two-thirds of the lugger's cargo, for my own use, and, disguised as skipper Ledbetter's son, ran out to the fleet and had an interview with the admiral."

"Ha! you did this?"

"Yes, sir, and was well paid for the cargo I took, and was given this letter to bring back and hand to my supposed father, Newell Ledbetter, who would give it into the keeping of the proper person."

"Aha! this confirms all my suspicions, my boy—I mean my dear—no, no, madam—I have it now, but your clothing deceives me as to your sex; yes, yes, you have done well indeed; but where is this skipper, Newell Ledbetter, and his crew?"

"In irons on my vessel, and subject to your orders, sir."

"I'll string them up, the traitors; and their lugger?"

"Lies in an inlet on the Sound; but she is hardly seaworthy, as they doubtless feared to risk a better craft."

"Keep her, as she may be useful to you, for I wish you to serve me still further, as a kind of sea vidette, for I learn that your craft sails like a witch."

"She is very fast and seaworthy, sir, and I am at your service, if I can be of any use."

"You can be, if I only knew where to find you; but you have dodged all of our naval officers most cleverly."

"I will tell you, sir, how I can be communicated with; but now, if you will send a boat with me to my vessel, I will return you the prisoners."

"I will send my aide in my barge; do you return at once?"

"Yes, sir, for I have nothing more to keep me here," was the rather sad reply.

"Ah! but you will pardon me, I know, when I ask if I cannot remunerate you—"

"No, no, general, I act from love of my country, not for gold; farewell, sir," and resuming her wig and mustache, and throwing her cloak around her, Captain Kit turned to go, when the general stepped forward and grasped her hand, while he said kindly:

"My dear girl, for you seem nothing more, after meeting you, and hearing all you have said, I no longer believe you to be the creature rumor has painted you."

"What has driven you to this disguise and the strange life you lead I know not, nor will I ask; but you have to-night rendered our country noble service, and all shall be placed before the proper authorities, that you may not longer be hunted down by the flag you are serving so well."

"Good-by, and remember that I am still your friend."

"From my heart I thank you, sir," was all that Captain Kit could say, for the emotions that almost choked her.

"I will call my aide to accompany you."

"And I will explain to him how you can communicate with me, sir."

The general touched a bell, and a young and dashing looking young officer entered.

"Captain Ivey, see this!—no, see this gentleman back to his vessel, and he will give you some prisoners to bring back, and, under no circumstances allow them to escape, for they are to ornament a gallows," and again bowing to Captain Kit, she turned away, accompanied by the young aide-de-camp.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TREASURE.

ONCE more back to Montauk Point, the scene of my romance goes, and to the cabin of Captain Kit, one night a week after her interview with the American commander in New York.

Seated at a table, the strange woman is bending over the map of the Mad Sailor, her head resting in her hands.

"Well," she says half aloud, as she draws the lamp nearer to her; "Well, all my studying of this map at last brings the buried treasure to this very spot where my cabin stands."

"This marked 'barren hillside,' then is now a forest, and I am sure that the treasure lies here beneath my very feet; but I will soon know," and rising she took a pick-axe and spade from an adjoining room, and spreading a large sail to put the dirt on, raised the flooring, and struck the first blow for fortune.

Though slight in her build, Captain Kit's active life had trained her muscles well, and she possessed considerable strength and endurance, and rapidly dug down into the hard earth.

Down, down, down she went, until a grave large enough to bury her in yawned before her, and still the iron touched only the earth.

But she did not despair, and worked on diligently until her small hands were blistered with her toil, and fatigue almost overcame her.

"No, no, I will not give it up yet, for here it must be, if anywhere," she said, and still she dug on and on, until she could stand upright in the hole, and the surface of the earth was level with her head.

"Oh, it is a cruel hoax, or I have not found the right spot," she cried, at last, and impatiently threw her shovel down.

But she started suddenly, for the iron gave back an answering ring, as though it had struck other metal.

Quickly she seized the implement again, and went to work, and a shout of joy broke from her lips, for she then knew that beneath her feet lay the buried treasure of the Pirate Kyd.

Away from the hard substance beneath her feet she scratched the earth, and an iron box was revealed.

With her shovel she pried up the lid, and again from her lips burst a shout of rapturous

joy, for she had found the treasure, riches untold, and her eyes were dazzled with the sparkle of precious gems, and the glitter of gold and silver.

Out of their long hiding-place she took them, until the box was emptied, and then it was drawn up and placed in a secure corner under her cot, and the riches replaced in it.

Then back into the hole she threw the earth, trampling it hard down with her tiny feet, and just as the east grew rosy, finished her night of terrible toil, and sunk down upon her bed utterly prostrated in body and mind, yet happy at heart, that at last she had found the treasure that would bring luxury and joy to those she loved, and enable her to track Ivan Ringold to the uttermost ends of the earth, for, having found out that her shot had not killed him, as she had believed, she was determined to yet avenge herself by bringing to an end his long career of crime.

CHAPTER XX.

CAPTAIN KIT AND THE JEW.

In her treasure hunting around the Montauk Point, Captain Kit had come upon a wild gorge, where she intended making her future home, as long as she remained at the headland.

The entrance to this spot was through a cliff that had been rent in twain by some convulsion of nature centuries before, and at its further end was a cavern of vast size and numerous chambers.

A corridor extended through this cave, and coming out upon the other side of the hill, was most convenient for Captain Kit, as her vessel lay not far away.

Expecting now to be of service to the Government, Captain Kit decided to move to this new abode, and a cabin was at once erected for her against the hillside, and the men found quarters in the spacious cavern, which they could defend against ten times their number, and then have a safe road for retreat.

Though the woman had confidence in her band, she cared not to have them know of the treasure, and so concealed it again, until after her removal to her new quarters, and then each night made a transfer of the riches, until all was securely hidden in the shaft of the cave at the back of her cabin.

To the still greater mystification of the crew, they were one night called to the quarters of their girl commander, and paid in gold, and most liberally paid too, and some of the more superstitious among them began really to believe that she had dealings with the Evil One, to conjure up riches at her will.

But from the day of her removal to her new home, Captain Kit seemed a changed woman, for much of the sadness faded from her face, and her crew now felt that she was certainly an American Patriot, and not an English spy.

A few weeks after her visit to the American commander at New York, the guard on duty came and reported a small vessel creeping along close inshore, and soon after it was announced that Captain Hugh Lennox desired to see her on business.

"Show him to my quarters," was the order, and soon after the young and handsome aide was ushered into her cabin, and was graciously welcomed by her.

Her beauty and grace, for she was now dressed in womanly attire, seemed to win his heart at a glance, and he seemed in no haste to get through the business that had brought him there, which was information from the general that the traitor skipper had been secretly hanged, the spies arrested, and other letters written and sent her to deliver to the British admiral, to throw him off his guard, regarding certain movements intended by the Americans.

"And the general wishes me to carry these on board the frigate?" she asked of Captain Lennox.

"He does, madam, and my little vessel is filled with stores for the fleet, to avoid suspi-

cion, and you can sail in her, and I will here await your return."

"I will start at sunset, and you can await me here, as it would be best," and Captain Kit gently pulled a rope near her hand and ten minutes after Calvin Clyde appeared.

"Mr. Clyde, I leave this gentleman as your guest until my return; please tell Kendrick to select four men to go with me on the strange sloop now lying in the inlet."

"Yes, Captain Kit, but may I suggest, if you intend again visiting the English fleet, that the same men accompany you? as it may avoid suspicion, you know, for traitors are not so easily found among Americans."

"You are right," Clyde; I will do as you request, so tell Dolon and those who went with me before.

"Captain, I hope to see you to-morrow again," and she bowed politely.

"May I request the honor of accompanying you as one of your crew?" quietly asked the aide.

"It is a fearful risk."

"As much for you, also; I will disguise myself as a common sailor."

"As you please; Mr. Clyde will furnish you with a rig of some kind," answered Captain Kit, and her visitor and lieutenant departed, to meet her at sunset on board the American officer's little sloop.

Disguised as Josiah Ledbetter, Captain Kit was not at first recognized by Captain Lennox, though her quick eyes had detected him at once under the guise of a weather-beaten old sailor.

As darkness crept over the waters the sloop got under way, and as the sun arose above the eastern horizon, the little craft again dropped anchor in the inlet, Captain Kit having again safely run the dangerous gantlet as a spy, and brought back letters of import from the British admiral, and received a handsome sum in gold for her produce.

With the papers and information thus obtained, Captain Lennox took his departure for New York, but he left his heart behind him in the keeping of the strange and daring woman whose life was such a deep mystery.

Hardly had the little sloop set sail, than Captain Kit gave orders for the Will-o'-the-Wisp to be ready to sail at sunset, and be gone for a week or more.

Then she went to her cabin, and selecting all the precious stones from the treasure, she concealed them about her clothing, and went on board her vessel.

"Which way shall I head, Captain Kit?" asked Dolon, who was at the helm.

"To Boston," was the quiet reply; and the following night, under cover of the darkness, the Will-o'-the-Wisp ran into a secluded harbor, and her fair commander, landing, set out alone for the city.

Seeking an inn she secured a room and sunk to sleep; but at an early hour she arose, and drawing her cloak around her, for she was attired in her naval uniform, she sauntered forth into the street, evidently bent on some important errand.

At last she paused before a store, above the door of which was a sign that read:

"JACOB LINDO,

DEALER IN PRECIOUS STONES."

"I would see Mr. Lindo," she said, entering and addressing a clerk.

"Can I not attend to the business?" was the answer.

"If I had thought so, I would not have asked to see your employer," was the stern response.

The young man took the hint, and she was ushered into the presence of a wary-faced old Jew, who regarded her from head to foot with a how-much-am-I-to-make-out-of-you look on his countenance.

"Vell, vat ish I to do for you?" asked Mr. Lindo politely, recognizing the uniform.

"I have some precious stones that I wish you to value for me, and to purchase if you care for them."

"They ish always goot properties; let me see dem."

She threw on the table, in a careless way, a piece of buckskin, in which, carefully rolled up was a fortune in diamonds.

At once the Jew became deeply interested, and instinctively he cried:

"Holy Isaacs! dere ish a fortune mit dese."

"So I know, so be sure not to tell me they are paste."

"You ish a naval officer; vere you gets dese?" he asked.

"Captured a pirate treasure; what are they worth to you?"

This was a poser, and the Jew began business, and one by one critically examined the stones, trying to find flaws where none existed, and to discover "off colors," where the gems were the purest white.

"Vell, I gives you twenty t'ousandt tollars for t're lot."

"Just one fifth their value; I will take them elsewhere."

"No, no, I will look at t'em again."

"There is no use, for you have already figured in your mind what they are worth, and what you will give; I want seventy-five thousand dollars."

The Jew looked astonished, but he was not, for he knew at that price there was a large profit for him.

But Captain Kit was firm, and he yielded, deciding to pay her in some depreciated currency.

Then another roll of buckskin displayed scores of magnificent rubies, and then followed emeralds, sapphires, and gems of all kinds, until Jacob Lindo believed himself in a dream and acting in a scene in the Arabian Nights.

A long time was the Jew pondering, examining, worrying, weighing, and trying to defraud Captain Kit in the bargain; but it ended in a price being set on all, which he accepted.

Then came a squabble over the depreciated currency, which was promptly refused, and a compromise was made on Bank of England notes and American bonds in equal parts, and Captain Kit returned to her vessel, which that night crept out of the harbor, and headed for Light-house Island.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LIGHT-HOUSE KEEPER.

"I'll take the helm now, Clyde, for I know this coast as I do the deck of the Will-o'-the-Wisp."

It was Captain Kit that spoke, and taking the tiller she held the vessel on through the darkness, straight into the inlet, where two years before the yacht of Bartley Livingstone had dropped anchor at the time of that fatal duel on the isle.

It was but an hour after sunset, and the moon was just rising out of the sea, as the craft glided to an anchorage, and Captain Kit sprang into the gig and pulled ashore.

Straight to the light-house she wended her way, and soon knocked at the door.

She heard some one moving within, and then came a voice:

"Who is there?"

"That is not Deaf Davy's voice," said Captain Kit to herself, and she drew a pistol from her belt, and then said aloud:

"One who would see the Deaf Davy; an old friend of his."

The door was opened and a tall, muscular man confronted her; but seeing her uniform he touched his hat politely, and said:

"Deaf Davy is dead, sir!"

"Dead!"

"Yes, sir, he died some months ago and I have his berth now."

There was something in the voice that struck her forcibly, and she said:

"Will you let me enter your cabin for a minute, and also hire me your sail-boat, that lies on the land side of the island, for I wish to go across to the mainland?"

"It lies at the same old place, for it was

Davy's boat, and you are welcome to it, if you return to-morrow."

"I shall not want it long; but tell me," and she gazed straight into his face, "is not your name Oscar Dalton?"

"It is, sir; have we met before?" asked the man in surprise.

"Yes, you once were paid by Lieutenant Ivan Ringold, to perform a mock marriage," she said fiercely, and the man's face changed color; but he said firmly, and in a sad tone:

"Years ago I fell from grace, and became an evil man, ay, a vagabond, and Ivan Ringold paid me well to perform for him the marriage ceremony; but thank God! I had not fallen as low as he had, and I did that which I had a right to do, being a regularly ordained minister of the church."

Captain Kit reeled as if about to fall; but recovering herself said, fervently:

"Thank God! thank God! now am I happy."

"Perhaps the maiden was a sister of yours?" suggested Oscar Dalton.

"She was one whom I love as such; I thank you, sir, and I hope you are doing well here."

"Yes, sir, I am making a living, but it is uphill work, as I have a mother in old Connecticut to support."

"Give her this as a souvenir from one you have served," and thrusting a roll of bills into the man's hand, Captain Kit turned away, calling back:

"I will return your boat before long; good-night!"

The man stood like one dazed for awhile, and then looked at the money and muttered:

"It is more than ten years' pay for me as light-house keeper; now I can make my old mother happy, and may God forever bless that young man."

Going out of his cabin he saw Captain Kit enter the sail-boat, raise the sail and speed away toward the mainland, and then the idea came to him:

"How did he get on the island?"

A short search soon discovered the Will-o'-the-Wisp at anchor, and the moonlight falling upon her decks showed that she was an armed vessel.

"Some young officer on a lark, I guess; well, I have nothing to do with his business, but again I say God bless him," and Oscar Dalton the light-house keeper returned to his lonely abode and once more sought rest.

But he arose at dawn to find his sail-boat back in its place, and the yacht hull down beyond the blue waves of the ocean.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

THE kind readers who followed my two romances, "The Boy Runaway" and "The Sea Triller," to their close, will remember what valuable service was rendered by Captain Kit and her crew, in the capture of Ned Darrell, the Pirate, and the departure of the Girl Commander from Montauk Point as soon as she had been discovered by her sister, also a deserted wife, and of Darrell, the Pirate.

They will also remember that after the execution of Darrell and his men, Captain Kit transferred the fleet Will-o'-the-Wisp to the American Government, and her men became seamen on board the cutter Sea Wizard, having been pardoned for their former outlaw acts as smugglers under Ringold.

Finding it impossible to trace Ivan Ringold, the two sisters returned to their home on the New England coast, where their parents gave them a joyous welcome, for the old sea captain was now at home, and no longer in want, as a letter had been one night mysteriously slipped under their door, telling him that a large fortune had been left him by an unknown friend, and that it was in the hands of an attorney in Boston, to whom he must apply.

Of course he applied to the address, but could not find out from whence it came, and so was at last content to settle down and enjoy it.

So back to their home went the two sisters, and to their parents they made full confession of all that had happened, even to the legacy of the Mad Sailor, and declared never again to leave the family roof-tree.

One day, for Kittie still loved the water too much to give it up, she urged Meta to sail with her across to Light-house Island.

But hardly had they landed when two pistol-shots, fired in close succession, startled them.

"Come, Meta, let us see what that means here in this spot," cried Kittie, and they bounded to the top of the hill.

There, before them in the vale they beheld a scene, such a one as Kittie had seen before, for a group of men were before them, one prostrate upon the earth, one bending above him, and two others standing apart.

One of those two who stood apart Kittie recognized as Bartley Livingstone, and a smoking pistol was in his hand; the other Kittie did not know.

But the one lying prone upon the ground she did know, and with a cry she started at a full run down the hill.

"Great God! Kittie, have you come to see me die?" gasped the dying man, turning his eyes upon her.

"Yes, Ivan Ringold; though you escaped death at my hand, you have fallen before one you also tried to wrong, and his wife is avenged for the death of her father and the insult you heaped upon her."

Ivan Ringold tried to speak, but the red current of life checked his utterance, and he fell back dead in the arms of his second.

"Come, Meta, let us go from here," and with a bow to the group of gentlemen she turned away, followed by her sister.

But upon returning home they found that a visitor had arrived, and he was no less a personage than Major Hugh Lennox, and he came to seek the heart and hand of the one time Captain Kit, whose life story he was now told in full.

But it did not change his love, and the two became lovers, and were wont to take many a pleasant sail over to Light-house Island, where, strange to say, Meta loved to accompany them, yet why they could not discover, as she always went off alone.

But one day the secret came out, for Oscar Dalton was the magnet that drew Meta to the Island, and the affair became so serious, that when at last a day was appointed for Kittie's marriage with Major Lennox, Meta proposed that it should be a double wedding—and it was, and though clouds of sorrow darkened their younger years, only sunshine fell upon them at last, for they lived in luxury and happiness until called to their last sleep, where joy and sorrow are unknown.

THE END.

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